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AINSLEE'S

MAY, 1918

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AINSLEE'S

The Magazine That Entertains

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CHARLES SAXBY

has written her wonderful story, with all of its glamour and romance, and its one great moment.

John Fleming Wilson, Alicia Ramsay, Elinor Chipp, F. Berkeley Smith, Lawrence Perry and Alan Dale are others who have helped make the June number of “the magazine that entertains.”

AINSLEE'S FOR JUNE

On sale the middle of May 20 cents a copy

AINSLEE'S

VOL. XLI.

MAY, 1918.

No. 4.



Behold Our Hero

By Ellis Parker Butler

Author of "Pigs Is Pigs,"
"The Incubator Baby," etc.

CHAPTER I.

"BEHOLD OUR HERO."

A FEW minutes after two o'clock one afternoon in August, 1917, a young man stepped from the smoking car of a train on the Long Island Railroad at Westcote, threw a half-smoked cigar aside, and hurried down the steps of the station to the street. He had pushed out of the car door so quickly after the stopping of the train that he was ahead of all the other passengers, but they were close behind him, and four or five saw what happened to the young fellow. The fifty or sixty other passengers, who did not arrive in time to see the happening, were crowded around him a moment or two later. None of them knew him.

The thing that happened to the young fellow was this: There was a turn in the street just beyond the railway station; there had been a slight rain; the street was smooth and greasy. Mrs. Eleanor Tutville, in haste to get to Manhattan, had told her chauffeur to waste no time putting on tire chains, with the result that when her limousine swung around the turn in the street, it

skidded and struck a livery hack that stood at the edge of the walk before the station. The hack, its wheels crumpled beneath it, toppled over on the walk, and one corner of the roof of the hack caught the young man on the head. He fell to the walk and lay there like one dead.

Out of the medley of noise composed of the clanging of a passing street car, the cursing of the hack driver, the shouts and inquiries of the crowd that instantly formed around the young fellow's prostrate form, and the squeak of a near-by peanut roaster, Mrs. Tutville's voice arose shrill and insistent:

"James! James! Why don't you do something?"

James was the chauffeur. He was doing what he thought was his duty, examining the mud guards and side of the limousine for evidences of injury and looking at the overturned hack to ascertain what the driver's probable claim for damages would be, but Mrs. Tutville cared nothing for that. From her seat in the limousine, she could see the face of the young man, looking like death and with a streak of blood across the brow.

"Yes, ma'am?" said James.

"Oh, don't stand there like a—like a—" screamed Mrs. Tutville, so excited that she could find no simile. "Don't you know he'll die? Don't you know I killed him? Do you want me hung, James Connors? Oh, if men only had some sense! Why don't you get him into the limousine and take him to the hospital before he dies like a log?"

"Yes, ma'am," said James. He walked around the hack and pushed the crowd aside as if it had been composed of feathers. "Git out o' my way, there!" he ordered. "Ain't you got no sense? Gimme a chance to fetch the guy to the hospital."

"Now, just a minute!" trilled a young woman who was kneeling at the young man's head. "If somebody will give me a—a few strips of white skirt or—or shirt, I understand this perfectly. I've had the full course in First Aid. If somebody will run to the drug store and get me a bandage—"

"Aw, git out o' me road!" said James, and he pushed her aside with a waft of his hand.

"Hold on, now!" ordered a policeman, who was going through the young man's pockets systematically. "I've sent in a call for the ambulance—"

"Aw, cheese it, Kelly!" said James. "I got to take the guy to the hospital, ain't I?"

He helped Kelly to cheese it by giving him a shove of the knee as he bent down to pick up the young man.

"James! James!" called Mrs. Tutville shrilly.

"Aw, shut up!" said James under his breath, but aloud he said, "Yes, ma'am. Comin', ma'am!"

The hackman, who had been talking damages up into the air, so to speak, dived for Mrs. Tutville. He began a noisy claim for reparation.

"Open that door, you man!" ordered Mrs. Tutville, and her tone was such that the hackman obeyed. "You'll be

paid," Mrs. Tutville added. "James, be careful!"

When the limousine swung around carefully and headed for the Westcote Hospital, it contained Mrs. Tutville and the young lady who had taken the full course in First Aid, the policeman and the inert young man. On the driver's seat sat James. Beside him sat Sammy Dodd, reporter for the *Westcote News*. As the car proceeded, he interviewed Mrs. Tutville into hysterics.

"Yes, ma'am," he said. "So you told Jim not to mind putting on the chains?"

"So I'm his murderer, and I'll know it till the day I die! Is he dead yet, Miss Wipley? Thank God! Oh, I'll never, never have the car out without chains again! I'll bury him like a hero! I'll spend untold wealth to have him get well!"

She began to sob.

"Who is he, Kelly?" Sammy Dodd asked, for he might be able to get the story in the last editions of the *News* and score a beat on the *Eagle*, if he made haste.

"Don't know," said Kelly gruffly. "You don't think I can do detective work in a minute, hey? There wasn't nothin' on him to say who he is. Ingersoll watch, brass chain, forty-two dollars an' sixty cents, an' a pocket handkerchief."

"No letters? No papers?"

"Not a dang!"

"No name on the handkerchief?"

"Never a bit!"

"Hum! Five feet and eight inches, about? Dark-gray suit. Tan shoes. Blue tie. Shirt with blue stripes and outing cuffs." Dodd jotted down the details. "Eyes?"

"Blue! Oh, very blue!" said Miss Wipley.

"And light-brown, curly hair," said Dodd. "Thanks! I'll exculpate you, Mrs. Tutville. I'll say the limousine

skidded. I'll say you administered first aid, Miss Wipley. Jim, let me off, will you? I can catch this car back to the office."

"You can say Officer Kelly accom-p'ned the injured man to the West-cote Hospital," said Kelly, "and would uv doubtless have knowed who he was but for all the guy's clothing bein' new bought."

"Oh, I'll give you a good one, Kel," said Dodd. "Two things we never miss—'The police were on the spot a moment later,' and, 'It was half an hour before the ambulance arrived.' We keep that in type for all occasions."

Mrs. Tutville's nervous excitement increased as the limousine neared the hospital, which stood near the edge of town. The young man had shown no sign of life and, although Miss Wipley repeatedly assured Mrs. Tutville that his pulse was beating, the excitable lady had no faith in Miss Wipley or her First Aid education. She was quite sure Miss Wipley was feeling the beat of her own pulse and that the victim of the skidding car was as dead as Adam.

"No, ma'am," said Officer Kelly consolingly. "I'm comin' along to get the daty for makin' out my report an' not to arrest you. An' it wouldn't be for murder in no case, ma'am. You can rest easy on that. There's a long ways between murder an' what you done to the young feller. There's murder in the first degree, an' in the second degree, an' in the third degree, an' then there's hommicide, an' beyond that yet there's manslaughter—which ain't nothin' but killin' a man. If you was took up, it wouldn't be no more than for manslaughter."

At this cheerful information, Mrs. Tutville lay back in the car and fainted.

"Water!" exclaimed Miss Wipley. "Somebody get me water! I know just what to do! Chauffeur, stop the car and get me water!"

"Aw, cheese!" said James. "Let her faint. We'll be at the hospital in less'n a minute. When she's fainted, she ain't worryin'."

As a matter of fact, they were at the hospital already. The car stopped, and James got down and opened the door. Miss Wipley stepped out.

"Hold the head and shoulders high," she piped. "Grasp firmly under the arms—"

Mr. Acker, the hospital manager, seeing Mrs. Tutville's car outside, came hurrying out. Only a short while before, Mrs. Tutville had given the hospital fifty thousand dollars, with which an entire new floor had been added and fitted up. When she had seen the beauty of the rooms her money had provided, she had, on the spot, added a yearly donation of ten thousand dollars for the upkeep of the floor.

"Git a stretcher, Acker," James said briefly. "The old dame has fainted an' we've got a guy in here the car knocked out."

"If I can be of any help—— I'm sure I can be of help," chirped Miss Wipley, but no one paid her any attention.

Mr. Acker hurried into the hospital, and in a moment two white-clad internes were at the side of the limousine, the unconscious man was on the stretcher, Mrs. Tutville was screaming that she did not want to be hung, but was gradually growing calmer, and Miss Wipley was standing, rather helplessly, doing nothing.

"James, go at once—— No, James, wait for me——"

Mrs. Tutville seemed frightfully upset and undecided. Mr. Acker and a white-clad nurse came to help her into the hospital.

"No!" she declared. "I can't go in! I can't look on the face of the man I murdered—manslaughtered. No, I must get to Manhattan at once! James, haven't you put on the tire chains yet?"

If he is dead, let me know, Mr. Acker. He shall have Christian burial—the best coffin money can buy. And spare no expense if he is alive! The best of everything! The best room, the best nursing, the best food. I'll pay!"

"Yes, Mrs. Tutville," said Mr. Acker.

The excitable lady seemed to grow much calmer, as people with money do when, in an emergency, they find an opportunity to spend money. She became calmer and calmer as she thought of details that would call for expenditure. The young man was to be X-rayed. He was to have the Tutville suite. He was to have Doctor Blaiddell and, if necessary, a dozen consulting physicians from New York. By the time James had fastened the anti-skids around the wheels, she was calm and commanding. She was the great lady again.

"I know I can trust you, dear Mr. Acker," she said. "Do all that can be done. James, to Manhattan!"

CHAPTER II.

"BEHOLD OUR HERO" AGAIN.

The reason Mrs. Tutville was so anxious to get to Manhattan that she could not wait to learn whether her victim was to live or die was her niece, Miss Betty Field. Miss Betty Field was an entirely charming young woman with extremely dark-blue eyes, brown hair that was almost black, a slightly impudent nose, and a voice that was like the softest, most satisfying velvet. She had been in France wearing a red cross since the beginning of the war, and she was now coming home for a well-deserved rest. Her home was her aunt's house; she had no other. The steamer on which Betty Field was to arrive was due at three o'clock that afternoon. She had written:

"Don't expect me to be a wreck. Look for a blooming young person, as

plump as a partridge. I want to rest, but most of all I want to rest my pug nose. It's so sick of smelling smelly things."

There was another reason, but one she did not write into her letters to her aunt. It was a hope. There was a young man from whom she had heard nothing for nearly three years—or even longer than that. His name was Richard Vickers, and she had met him in a rather ordinary way, parted from him with just one embrace and one kiss, and had wondered a thousand times where he was and what he was doing. She had just a suspicion that he might have forgotten her—and if so her heart would almost break—and just a suspicion that he might have appeared at Mrs. Tutville's home, seeking her, only to be turned away as an impossible person. She had, more than all else, a great hope that Richard Vickers might, by this time, be on the point of seeking her, and that he would seek her at the only address she had given him—"Care of Mrs. Eleanor Tutville, The Elms, Westcote, Long Island."

The Great War began, as all remember, late in the summer. Early in that same summer, Miss Adelia Finch, a thin, but eminent schoolmistress of Hopham Hill, Connecticut, in whose eminently classy institution Betty Field had studied and from which she had graduated; led a party of eight young ladies aboard a palatial steamer in New York harbor, for a complete tour of Europe. Betty Field was one of the party. Mrs. Tutville had felt quite safe in allowing her to go, because Miss Finch had conducted similar parties each summer for the past fourteen years, excepting only the summer when she had remained in America to have her appendix removed.

"And that makes me feel especially comfortable about Betty," Mrs. Tutville had said. "Miss Finch is not

nearly as apt to be taken down with appendicitis when she hasn't anything to be taken down with it with."

Miss Finch chaperoned her charges faithfully on board ship, but when there are eight healthy, lively young ladies to be chaperoned successfully, there must be a spirit of acceptance as well as a spirit of giving chaperonage and, on decks, there is always an end chair beyond which there is another chair. The deck chair beyond the one assigned to Betty Field was the one in which Richard Vickers happened to sit and, when her book dropped to the deck or one of her poor little feet stuck out beyond her steamer rug, what could a nice young man do? You can't be an utterly cold-blooded cad even if a young lady is chaperoned by a stiff dame in spectacles at the other end of a long row of young ladies. Dick Vickers picked up the book and handed it to Betty, and tucked in her foot nicely, and tipped his hat.

"Thank you. I've just finished this book," said Betty. "Would you like to read it?"

"Indeed I would," said Dick. "That's one of the best sellers I haven't read. I think it's the only one."

"Why? Do you specialize in them?" asked Betty, laughing. It was a laugh like velvet—like a deep, soft-green velvet shot with gold threads.

Dick Vickers also laughed.

"Well—" He laughed again. "Yes, I have been specializing in them, rather. I've been trying to get at the reason of them—why they are best sellers, you know. I've read," he said thoughtfully, "one hundred and nineteen best sellers. There are six a year—the six best sellers, you know. I've read all the six best sellers of the last twenty years except this one. And this will make one hundred and twenty."

"Goodness! And don't you read anything else?"

"I haven't read much else lately," he admitted cheerfully. He was always a cheerful fellow. "You see—" He hesitated. "Perhaps I ought to say that my name is Richard Chance Vickers."

This evidently meant nothing to Betty. She took it as mere self-introduction.

"Mine is Betty Field," she said.

"Delighted to make your acquaintance," laughed Dick. "And such is fame!"

"Ought I to know you? Are you one of the famous?" asked Betty meekly. "I'm really such a stupid!"

"I was just indulging in the hope that springs eternal in every writer's breast," said Dick. "I'm not famous. I've written two—count 'em—two short stories. And sold them!"

"Goodness! And you're a really, truly author! You're the first I've ever seen!"

"Thank you. I accept the adulation, although it might be a little more reverent."

"Go on, please—about the two short stories."

"I wrote them and sent them to a magazine, and the editor bought them and printed them in his magazine," said Dick.

"That's not all. What's the rest?"

"Do you really want to know? That's sweet of you. A writer loves to talk about himself. The editor was a bully good fellow; I know that now. Everybody says so. So my two stories were all make-believe; they were sort of Anthony Hope-Richard Harding Davis affairs, if you know what I mean. I laid the scenes in Calbaria, an imaginary country. It might be Serbia or Bulgaria or Rumania—any or all of those places. I never saw the real places. I invented queens and princesses and dukes right and left and, of course, had a young American hero."

"Oh, I just love them!" exclaimed Betty.

"And a black duke who was an awful villain," said Dick.

"Oo!" said Betty, pretending to shudder.

"And then the editor man wrote me a letter and said he would like to have more such stories, and a lot of rot about getting a thrill himself out of the tales. He said I ought to write a full-sized novel. 'You won't write the Great American Novel,' he said, to keep my head from swelling, 'but you've the right pen to write a best seller.' Then he wrote three pages explaining why a best seller was a best seller and told me to go at the job."

"And——" said Betty with interest.

"Oh, I decided to write a best seller," said Dick. "That's why I'm here. I read all the best sellers and decided that I knew what was what—that I could see why they were best sellers and that if I wanted to write one, my best chance was to write what I had been writing. So I'm on my way to Serbia."

"Serbia! Of all places!" Betty exclaimed.

"For local color," explained Dick. "I have the novel all planned, but I may change it somewhat after I see the country. That was where I felt weak—I didn't know the country I was writing about. It was all right in a 'skim-the-earth' short story, but when I got down to work on the novel, I couldn't feel my feet on the ground. So I had a little money—a few hundred dollars—and I'm on my way to see Serbia. And if Serbia won't do, I'll see Bulgaria and Roumania. I want to see Paris and St. Petersburg, too. I want scenes laid there."

"It's wonderful!" said Betty. "And what are you going to call it?"

"The Lost Princess." I chose the title before I knew what I would write about. People like to read about princesses. When I settled on having a

princess and a stanch young American hero, I knew I was on the right track."

"I know," said Betty. "I just love them! 'Behold our hero, his hands bound, his head wrapped in the cloak, strapped in the bottom of the droshky, while the maddened horses tore onward to the hut that was to see his death!'"

"Now, just for that," said Dick, "I'm going to put that very sentence in the novel," and he drew out his notebook and scribbled in it.

Of course that was not the end of the affair. In the pleasant days that followed, they talked much of the novel.

"I've thought a lot about it," Dick said. "I think one reason there are so many failures among the novels is that the authors don't throw themselves into their work utterly. When a man writes a novel, he should see nothing, hear nothing, think nothing but that novel. It should be his days and his nights. The moment I touch foot on European soil, I'm going to forget I'm Richard Vickers, forget there is an America, forget everything but my novel. Until I write the last word of it, I shall not be Richard Vickers, but a novelist."

Betty said she thought this was the right way to go about it. She was reaching the point where she thought everything Dick thought was right. Often they stole away from the two end chairs and walked the deck together. Miss Finch spoke to Betty about this quite severely, but Betty said it was all right and there was really nothing wrong and still less that Miss Finch could do. Miss Finch was not especially keen about doing anything, anyway. She quite approved of Richard Vickers after she had had a long talk with him.

The day before the boat docked, Dick and Betty had a long talk. It was then that the one embrace and the one kiss occurred. By that time Dick was call-

ing her "my princess," for he had told her he meant to model the princess in his story on her.

"Because," he said quite seriously, "you're the sweetest girl I've ever known, and if I can just get you into the novel as you are, every one will love you. That's a big thing in a novel—to have a heroine every one loves."

"You silly old dear!" said Betty. "I know your book will be a success, even without that. It must be!"

"Yes, it must be," said Dick. "More than ever, now, it must be, because so much more depends on its success now. I can't come back to my princess as a failure."

"Dick! As if you could ever be that!"

As they left the steamer, Dick carried sundry parcels that belonged to Betty. They traveled to London side by side. There they were to part, for Miss Finch's tour included England, while Dick meant to go directly to Paris, where one of the scenes of his novel was laid. From Paris he hoped to go to St. Petersburg—it was not then called Petrograd—and thence down into the Balkan states. There was no kiss and no embrace in the great London station. They stood for a long moment hand in hand and looking into each other's eyes, and then they parted.

Their understanding was perfect. When the novel was written and a success, Dick would find Betty. He wrote Mrs. Tutville's address in his notebook—as if he could ever forget it!—and said:

"I'll find you, never fear! If you've gone to the tip of South America or are hiding in an igloo at the north pole, I'll find you! Until then—good-by, dear."

"Good-by, Dick."

Miss Finch and her party were in Switzerland when the war threw all Europe into confusion. The good lady

kept her head remarkably well and hurried her charges to Paris, where there followed the tiresome wait and endless negotiations for transatlantic passage. For Miss Finch this was complicated by her need of keeping the party together, and before the three weeks of delay ended, Betty had made plans of her own. She managed to get a cable to Mrs. Tutville explaining that she wished to remain in France to help the wounded, who were already coming back from those disastrous first battles, and Mrs. Tutville, rightly thinking that Betty meant to remain whether or no, cabled a consent and money. Miss Finch was not sorry to be relieved of one of her charges, and so Betty was left in Paris.

Her cheerfulness, her physical fitness, and her general efficiency gave her high rank among those with whom she was sharing the duties of the hospital to which she was assigned. Mrs. Tutville knew her address, and Betty did not worry about Dick. When he wanted her, he could find her.

But no Dick came. Betty did not fret, but her long work was beginning to sicken her. Her associates, the tireless doctors, the friends she had made in Paris—all urged her to take the rest she so well deserved. There came a time when—despite what she wrote her Aunt Eleanor—the hospital scenes and odors, even the odor of a clean antiseptic, drove her to the verge of hysteria. Then she yielded and went home.

The steamer—in spite of Mrs. Tutville's fear that she would be too late, because of her accident, to meet it—did not dock for over an hour after the limousine reached the pier. Betty threw her arms around her aunt and hugged her rapturously.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you!" she cried. "I didn't know how terrible it all was over there until I saw you standing on the dock." She looked around, seeking some one, but not quite

hopefully. "And no one else came to meet me?"

"Your Uncle Michael has the tooth-ache," said Mrs. Tutville, as one would say, "The poor worm!"

CHAPTER III.

WELL, THEN, "BEHOLD OUR HERO."

The thing that had happened to Richard Vickers was as wild as anything he could have put in his novel. He picked up the local color he needed in Paris, spent a month in St. Petersburg, and made his way to Serbia, traveling by way of Vilno and Lemberg, dipping into the Carpathian Mountains as far as Stryj and Czernowitz, and so through Roumania into the Serbian mountains. Here he found the local color he wanted and in prolific abundance. He found fastnesses and castles, bandits—who were good-natured fellows—and the quaint villages and dark forests of which he had dreamed. His novel grew apace. The lost princess suffered terrible adventures and had a thousand hairbreadth escapes, and the stanch young American hero—Jack Derring—rescued her again and again from the clutches of Black Michael and his bands of evildoers.

Then, with unbelievable swiftness, came the war. With five chapters still to do, Dick put his novel aside and plunged into the work of relieving the misery that came into being overnight. With the fall of Belgrade and the onward sweep of the Austrians, Dick, with two newspaper correspondents—one English and one Russian—fled backward. His manuscript he lost in a river where he lost his clothes.

His flight was in reality the retreat of a hospital, and when the Austrians enveloped him, he was still a part of the hospital. Then began the long fight against death and disease, against filth and famine, among the prostrate Serbs—a fight compared with which the hos-

pital work on the Western front was hardly more than a pleasant parlor entertainment.

There was nothing with which to work. The crudest makeshifts for surgical supplies had to be found. There was one awful month when even rags were not to be had, and Dick and the other faithful men scraped willow wood to get a sort of crude lint for dressing wounds. Men, women, and children died of disease and hunger. The story of Serbia is one of the blackest and saddest of the war.

The time came when an officious Austrian decided that Richard Vickers was a danger to the Teutonic races in arms assembled. Perhaps it was that some new outrage against Serbia was contemplated, and alien eyes were not to be permitted to see it; perhaps it was a freakish bit of war madness. Vickers and ten other male nurses, together with three American doctors, were sent across the border—Roumania was now in Teuton hands—and together began the long, slow journey to Petrograd.

From Petrograd Dick made his way to London. Here he remained until he had rewritten the novel, even to the last line.

His last line and his last cent came pretty close to vanishing at the same moment, but he had made friends, and two of them staked him for his passage home. He landed in New York with eight dollars in his pocket and no baggage. The novel in his hand and the clothes on his back constituted all his worldly possessions. He walked up-town from the pier at which the steamer landed him and went straight to the office of the editor who had bought his two short stories.

"You won't remember me," he said. "My name is Richard Vickers—"

"The man I told to write the best seller," said the editor promptly. "How are you? Write it?"

"It's here," said Dick, patting the parcel he held in his lap. "I came to you the minute I landed. I've been in Europe, in Serbia, Petrograd—in a lot of places. I want two things. I want to know who will buy my novel and who will buy two articles I wrote on the way over—articles about Serbia."

"Sam Roach for the novel. Let me see your articles," said the editor.

He pushed back his chair and took the two short manuscripts from Dick. First he glanced through them; then he began at the first page and read each through.

"Take four hundred dollars for the two?" he asked. "You'll want cash."

He pushed a button and told the young lady who appeared to have a check for four hundred made out to the order of Richard Vickers.

"Now come out and eat lunch with me," he said. "We may meet Roach. I eat where he does."

They did meet Roach. He was a big, good-natured man and he said, good-naturedly, that he would look at the novel.

"Where are you stopping?" he asked.

"Where ought I?" asked Dick. "I haven't stopped anywhere yet—I'm still on my way."

Several hotels were mentioned.

"No matter," said Roach. "Stop in some time and ask about the novel. Stop in to-morrow and take lunch with me, anyway. I'll let you know about the book inside of a week."

The editor went with Dick to the bank he patronized, to have the check cashed; Roach carried off the manuscript of the book; Dick sought a hotel.

The hotel he chose was not one of the grand affairs. He chose a hotel that stood on one of the cross streets, not too gorgeous and not too cheap, for his garments were too worn and soiled to let him feel at home in the more

splendid hostleries and he felt that he deserved a good bed and good food. With his money in his pocket, he set out from the hotel to purchase new garments, and he did. He needed everything, and he bought everything, from socks to hat. The afternoon was well along when he began—editorial lunches are often lengthy affairs—and when he carried his purchases back to the hotel, he had still much to do.

He completed his purchases the next morning, indulging in a revelry of buying, and when he had left these purchases at the hotel, he hurried to the office of Sam Roach.

The publisher, if he was waiting for Dick, did not show it. He was deep in papers that lay on his desk.

"One minute, Vickers," he said. Dick waited at least ten. "Now!" said Roach, and he took his hat and led the way to the elevator. It was not until they were seated in the restaurant and he had ordered their meal that he mentioned the novel.

"Boy," he said, "I'm going to publish your book, and I'm going to have it on the market in the shortest time any firm ever got out a book. I looked at the first page of that book when I went back to the office yesterday, and I didn't do a lick of work until this morning. My wife is in the country, and I ate dinner last night with that book propped in front of me. Your manuscript is all over butter and catsup and mayonnaise and assorted food. From the time I read the first line until I finished the last page, I didn't know I was in America. You've done the biggest romantic novel that has been written in twenty years, and I'm going to print one hundred thousand copies as a first edition. I'm going to break my rule and give you fifteen per cent —on a new author's first book. I'm going to put it out as a dollar-fifty book and I'm going to make a fortune out of it, and there's a check for one thou-

sand dollars advance royalty, and here is the contract!"

Vickers fingered the check and looked at Roach with amazement.

"Advance royalty?" he asked.

"A payment in advance on what your book will earn for you at twenty-two and a half cents a copy. We pay royalties twice a year. This thousand is on account, as you may say."

"And—on a hundred thousand copies I'll earn twenty-two thousand, five hundred dollars!"

"Well, if I don't sell nearer ten times one hundred thousand copies of that book than a paltry one hundred thousand, I'm a goat!" said Roach. "Here, sign this contract. I won't let you out of that chair until you sign it. Here, waiter, write your name here as witness to this signature. Ah, now I can breathe again! Vickers, I don't want to swell you all up, but you've done a book—time, tide, and everything considered—that should take this country by storm. We're interested in the Balkans. Your Calbaria makes us see Serbia and Bulgaria and those dinky kingdoms as they are. You've got the sweetest heroine that has been put into a book in fifty years, and your Jack Derring! There's a hero! He's a hero that does things! Whenever he comes on the page, something is sure to happen, and it does."

Dick was blushing. How could he do anything else?

"I was afraid I had made him a little—well—perhaps too heroic——"

"Not a bit! People'll love him. They'll eat him alive. He's great! I liked him myself. We all like the stanch young American when he gets a sword in his hand and sets out to rescue the downtrodden princess. I don't want to set your hopes too high, but you can count on a sale of one hundred thousand as sure as you sit there."

"One hundred thousand copies!" breathed Dick.

"What? Oh, yes! That at least. It's a best seller and the biggest kind of best seller. Well, I've got to hurry away. I'm rushing that book. I've dropped everything and am going to give that book all my time until it's on the stands. Drop in at the office any time."

At the hotel Dick put the check and his surplus money in an envelope and gave it to the clerk to place in the hotel safe for safe-keeping. His heart was singing. He had written a best seller; his publisher had told him it was safe to count on at least one hundred thousand copies. Although his brand-new collar did not show a speck of dirt, he changed it for another brand-new collar, picked out the handsomest of his new ties, and hurried to the Long Island Railroad station. He was bound for Long Island, for Westcote, for The Elms, for the home of Mrs. Eleanor Tutville, and for Betty!

As he hurried across the walk to take the hack that stood at the curb, the hack leaped suddenly toward him and struck him in the head. He put out a hand, and then all went black.

CHAPTER IV.

AND NOW "BEHOLD OUR HERO."

In a bed in the Tutville suite in the Westcote Hospital Richard Vickers lay, his head in bandages, his eyes closed, still absolutely unconscious. Had he been royalty, he could hardly have been attended by more persons than stood at his bedside. Doctor Blaisdell, somewhat stolid and stern, held his wrist and looked at a watch; beside him Miss Durkee, the pretty young trained nurse who was assigned to all Doctor Blaisdell's most important cases, was ready to receive and carry out any orders the doctor might give; at the foot of the bed Mr. Acker, the manager of the hospital, and Miss Probst, the superintendent, awaited Doctor Blaisdell's

temporary verdict, while young Doctor Abelman, one of the hospital internes, stood at the far side of the bed near the window.

"No change," said Doctor Blaisdell. "Pulse strong, respiration good, fever a minimum. I'll drop in again after dinner, Abelman. If anything occurs, you'd better telephone me." He scribbled a few words on the card Miss Durkee handed him. "You can let up on the bromide," he said.

He walked to the door with his heavy, silent tread.

"These cases," he said to Acker, "are more or less guesswork. If he regains consciousness, we'll see. If he doesn't, he'll probably drop off and never know it."

"I know," said Acker. "Like that negro. I'm going home, Miss Durkee. Did Miss Probst tell you we are very anxious to know who the young man is? Mrs. Tutville is greatly interested in the case, and you know what she has done for the hospital. If your patient regains consciousness and you can get his name and address, you'd better let Miss Probst know immediately."

"Yes, Mr. Acker," said the nurse.

"You might let me know, in any case, if he regains consciousness," said Miss Probst.

"Yes, Miss Probst," Miss Durkee replied.

They filed out and let the nurse alone with her patient. There was little for her to do. It was six o'clock, the hour when the day nurses went off duty and the night nurses came on, and she heard the swish of their dresses and their low-toned voices as they passed along the corridor, with now and then the gruffer tone of an interne going down to dinner. An hour passed and another hour and her patient had not moved. At eight she moistened his lips. She was turning away when he opened his eyes and looked directly at her.

"Bess!" he murmured.

As if this had exhausted his strength, he closed his eyes again. Miss Durkee waited. Then, as he seemed to have sunk into the stupor again, she tiptoed to the telephone and called Miss Probst.

"This is Miss Durkee, Miss Probst," she said softly. "My patient opened his eyes a moment ago. He spoke a name. I think it was 'Bess.' I thought perhaps you'd like to come up."

"I'll come up," said the superintendent, and in a few minutes she entered the room.

"Has he spoken again?" she whispered, bending over the bed.

"No. Just the once. I am sure it was 'Bess' he said."

As if to confirm this, the patient opened his eyes. Something like the beginning of a smile twitched his lips.

"Bess!" he said again.

"What? What is it?" asked Miss Probst.

"Bess. Bess Eller," said Vickers.

"Yes, we'll get her," said Miss Probst kindly. "You mustn't worry about anything."

"Bess Eller," repeated the patient. He spoke thickly, but there was an eager, almost a triumphant light in his eyes.

"Yes," Miss Probst said. "But now can't you tell me your own name? So we can tell her who it is wants her," she added coaxingly. "Try!"

"Bess Eller," said Vickers.

His eyes closed again.

"Please!" said Miss Probst, patting his arm lightly, but he did not respond.

"He's unconscious again," she said. "I shan't wait. I've no doubt I can find the name in the telephone books or in the directory. If we can find this Bess Eller, we'll be able to learn from her who he is. Let me know if he speaks again, Miss Durkee."

"Yes, Miss Probst."

Mr. Acker had returned to the hos-

pital, and Miss Probst went to his office.

"Mrs. Tutville has just telephoned," he said. "I was just about to ask for you. Anything new?"

"He's spoken, but he's unconscious again. He spoke a name—Bess Eller. He seemed very keen about it, and repeated it several times. If we could find her in one of the telephone directories, we could probably learn all about him."

Mr. Acker was already reaching for the directories. There were numerous Ellers, as well as Ellerts, Ellerds, and Ellerys, both in the city of New York and in the suburban directory. The Ellers yielded nothing. There was no Bess and no Elizabeth. The Ellerds and Ellerts gave no better results. Neither did the Ellerys until he reached the name of Roger P. Ellery in the suburban directory, followed by the call number "2314 Wayside."

"What's that? Hospital? No, none of us are in a hospital. Oh, I didn't understand! Somebody in the hospital wants to speak to Bess? Yes, just a moment. I'll call her."

Acker heard the aside, "Bess, phone! Somebody wants you!" and after a moment of waiting, a young, cheery voice spoke.

"This is Bess. Who is it wants me?"

"This is the Westcote Hospital, Miss Ellery," said Acker. "A young man was injured in Westcote to-day and has been here in the hospital unconscious. We're very anxious to know who he is, and the only clew we have is your name. He was conscious for a minute only, and he spoke your name. If you could come to the hospital—"

"Father," Acker heard her say aside, "Jack's hurt! He's in the Westcote Hospital!" Then, into the telephone, "I'll come!"

A half minute later, Mr. Acker's telephone bell rang. It was the voice he now knew to be Mr. Ellery's that spoke:

"Westcote Hospital? This is Ellery speaking. Give that young man who was injured to-day the best you have in every way. I'll guarantee any expenses."

The run from Wayside to Westcote is not over fifteen minutes in an automobile, even when the car observes the speed limit, and from the time when Miss Ellery telephoned to the time when she entered the hospital was not twenty minutes in all. She entered with a rush, a red-cheeked, breezy girl of twenty, athletic and evidently able to take good care of herself.

"Where is Jack?" she asked. "Is he badly hurt?"

"I'll take you up to his room," said Miss Probst.

"Wait till I bring mother in," said Miss Ellery. "Jack isn't dead? Then mother can stand it."

She hurried out and returned escorting a woman who was, among other things, old enough to be Miss Ellery's mother. She was also sour appearing.

"And if he was dead, it would be your fault and father's," Bess Ellery was saying. "Can she sit here?" she asked Mr. Acker. "Sit here, then," she told her mother.

The older woman obeyed resentfully. It was evident that she would have something to say to Bess Ellery later. She was not at all a woman to be ordered to sit here or sit there, but a woman accustomed to order others to sit or stand.

Bess Ellery followed Mr. Acker and Miss Probst to the elevator, which carried them quietly upward.

"He's my brother," Miss Ellery explained. "Sad dog, Jack is. The old folks chucked him out a while back. Ran his runabout into a post and broke his left wing, and then ran right off and bought a twin six and charged it to dear old papa. That was seven thousand he cost papa in cars in two years. So they had a real row, and father and

mother fired little brother. I knew the minute you telephoned that it was Jack. What has he broken now? Leg?"

"His head was struck. He's still unconscious."

"Oh! Knocked silly, poor dear! I thought you meant he was loaded—piffy, you know—too much cocktail. That's bad, isn't it, a knock on the head like that?"

"It may be most serious," said Miss Probst. She opened the door of the Tutville suite. "We must be rather quiet, you know," she warned.

Bess Ellery walked to the bed with her firm, quick tread and looked down at the patient. Miss Durkee stood, as was proper. Miss Ellery looked at the patient a moment and then turned to Miss Probst.

"Who's this?" she asked. "I don't know this chap from Adam."

"I was afraid you'd jumped too quickly to the conclusion that he was your brother," said Miss Probst, "but I wish you'd be quite sure you don't know him before you finally decide. He spoke your name."

"Push the light more this way," said Bess Ellery. "That's better."

She stood so long looking at him that finally Mr. Acker spoke.

"You don't know him?"

"Yes," said Bess Ellery, "I do. I'm trying to think of the chap's name. You know," she said suddenly, facing Mr. Acker, "I don't know that I ever knew his name. I can't remember it, and I don't believe I ever knew it. I called him 'Dreamy.' We used to bathe together at Asbury. Years ago! No, I'm sure I never knew his name. I was ten or about that, and he was fourteen—fifteen—something like that. Awfully nice, sweet-minded chap. We had a genuine love affair—kids, you know. Never met but in the ocean, and we made a kid romance of it. And I don't believe I ever knew his name. Poor chap!"

She touched the patient's forehead gently.

"Do you think he'll die?" she asked. "It seems a shame for him to slide off like this, doesn't it? And no one to know who he is! Not a friend. No one to know him."

Even now she did not leave the side of the bed.

"Think of him remembering me all this time and asking for me," she said, with something perilously near emotion. "Well, I'll stick by him, Mr. Acker. He'll have one friend. If—"

As if he had been waiting for this promise, the patient opened his eyes and looked full in her face.

"Water? A drink, please?" he said.

Miss Durkee hastened to grant the request. He drank deeply and then looked around the room. He seemed to know at once that he was in a hospital, as was obvious enough, with the two women in nurses' costumes and the bare walls of the room. He put up his hand and felt the bandages on his head.

"You speak to him," whispered Miss Probst. "Tell him your name. He may not recognize you."

"You don't know me, do you, Dreamy?" Bess Ellery said, smiling down at him. "I'm Bess Ellery. Don't you remember the girl you used to play with on the beach at Asbury?"

He looked at her rather blankly. He was trying to remember, but he could not, nor is it to be wondered at, for he had never known that the name of the girl he had met at Asbury was Bess Ellery. He had called her "Kidlets." He did not recognize, in this girl, the playmate of one long-ago summer. Neither did he find any meaning in the name "Bess Ellery," for when his lips had pronounced what had seemed to be that name, he had been trying to say, triumphantly, "Best Seller." That phase, brief and dreamlike, had passed. Other things were now racing through his poor, jolted brain.

"He doesn't remember me," said Bess Ellery.

"Ask him his name," whispered Miss Probst.

"Dreamy," said Miss Ellery, "we want to know your name. Won't you tell us your name?"

"My name?" he said, and he frowned and pointed a finger at her. "You know my name. I know not what miserable scheme of Black Michael's this may be, duchess, but it will avail him nothing. Go to him and tell him that for me. Let him plot and plan as he will, the princess shall be wrested from his accursed clutches or my name is not Jack Derring, American citizen, stanch and true!"

CHAPTER V.

WILL YOU PLEASE "BEHOLD OUR HERO?"

Richard Chance Vickers, author of the still unpublished novel, "The Lost Princess" (Samuel Roach, publisher, \$1.50 net), fell back exhausted after uttering the strange words just noted. He lay on his pillow, breathing hard, but with his eyes closed, and Miss Durkee placed her cool hand on his forehead, for she saw he was not himself.

"He's not himself," she said.

"How do you know that?" asked Bess Ellery, with some asperity. "How do you know whether he's Jack Derring or not? You said you didn't know who he was."

"Miss Durkee did not mean that," said Miss Probst. "His name is, no doubt, Jack Derring, but Miss Durkee means he is under some hallucination, due to an internal fever—possibly of the brain—caused by his accident. In plain words, his mind is wandering. You're certainly not a duchess—although you may look like any number of them—and Black Michael and the princess he mentioned are evidently mere dream creatures. You mustn't let yourself be offended by anything we matter-of-fact hospital folk say, Miss

Ellery, for you're still our only clew to the identity of the young man."

"That is so," said Mr. Acker. "Does his name—Jack Derring—suggest anything to you now? Did you ever hear it? Can you recall that he ever told you where he lived?"

Miss Ellery walked to the window and stood in deep thought.

"I do remember!" she said, turning to the bed again. "He was from the West. I don't know what part of the West. I recall that he always suggested prairies to me. I'm not sure that he ever mentioned cowboys, but I thought of cowboys when he was with me. I'm sure he was from the West. That's all I can be sure of, and I'm not very sure of that."

She stopped short, for Dick Vickers had again opened his eyes. He looked up and saw the sweet face of Miss Durkee above him and smiled confidently. Putting out one hand, he clasped her free hand and pressed it affectionately.

"Thank you, Marna," he said. "You're always true to us. Brave little heart, we will yet foil them all." He sat straight up in bed, and as he looked upon the others, his eyes became hard and his mouth set in a firm line. "As for you, my precious enemies, your day will come! The sword of Black Michael may have laid me low," and he felt his bandaged head, "but the black blood of his heart shall wet the soil of Calbaria before Jack Derring is done with him! You, duchess," he said, looking straight at Bess Ellery, "so fair and so false, who were my friend in the long ago, I will deal with you anon. This make-believe is cunningly conceived, but it does not deceive me for one moment."

"You must be quiet, Mr. Derring," said Miss Probst soothingly. "You've had a serious accident and you're in a hospital. Try to be calm, and in a few days—"

"Hospital!" laughed Dick mockingly. "Hospital! And you are the head nurse, I suppose! A pretty hospital, to be sure, with the Queen of Calbaria posing as head nurse and that sneaking, bald-headed rascal behind you there!"

"Please!" said Miss Probst gently. "This is Mr. Acker, the manager of the hospital."

"A new and noble position for his majesty, the King of Calbaria," cried Dick, "by my word! But come! Enough of this silly masquerade! In vain you have rigged up some corner of your dungeons in this manner! In vain you have disguised yourselves!"

He threw Miss Durkee's hand from him rather roughly.

"Marna, my garments! My sword! Quick! There is bloody work to do!"

Before they could stop him, he was out of bed and standing on the floor. He was rather pitiful and rather ridiculous and, to Miss Ellery, rather disconcerting, as he stood there swaying in his short hospital nightdress, trying to assume a pose equal to all the heroic poses of all the heroes of all the romantic novels of the last twenty years. His knees shook and his hands trembled. He looked about him helplessly and sank weakly to the bed as Miss Durkee and Miss Probst hastened to prevent him from falling to the floor. All the heroism seemed to drop from him as they helped him into bed and replaced the covers.

"Too weak! Too weak! They have done their accursed work too well!" he moaned, and tears came into his eyes.

"Poor chap!" said Miss Ellery, and her voice showed how deeply she was touched. "Can't you do something? Isn't there anything you can do?"

"You'd better telephone for Doctor Blaisdell," said Miss Probst to Mr. Acker. "He'll want to know about this at once. And it might be as well to telephone Mrs. Tutville and let her

know we have the young man's name. It'll make her more comfortable. I wouldn't worry, Miss Ellery. He's very weak, and it'll be some days before he's quite himself again. See, he's so weak he's fallen asleep already."

Miss Ellery hesitated; then she put her hand on the patient's forehead as she had seen Miss Durkee do. There were tears in her eyes.

"If there's anything I can do, you'll let me know, won't you?" she said, and she hurried out of the room.

"I'll telephone for Doctor Blaisdell," said Mr. Acker, and he and Miss Probst left Miss Durkee alone with her patient.

For a minute after they had departed, Miss Durkee stood looking down at the handsome head on the pillow. Then Dick Vickers opened his eyes and grinned at her.

"I fooled them that time, didn't I, Marna?" he said, with quite childish glee, for at bottom all romantic heroes are only swashbuckling children. "That was a good trick—pretending I was as weak as a kitten. What fools, to think Jack Derring, American stanch and true, could be knocked out by one blow of a scoundrel's sword! As a matter of fact, my girl, I fooled even you, didn't I? Tut! This is nothing but a paltry scalp wound, but it served my purpose. Why, when Black Michael and his three bravos met me in the wood, I could have slain them all with one sweep of my sword, but that was not my game. To get inside this castle, that was the problem, hey? How to do it? Like a flash the solution came to me—let the black traitor wound me ever so slightly. But you saw me; you were behind the oak all the while, of course. You saw how I handled my sword and held his three minions at bay, wounding each of them, and then, when Black Michael drew his dagger, how wizardlike I let it slide along my blade until it touched my

scalp. A mere touch—a pinprick—that was all I allowed him!"

He laughed heartily at the memory.

"And so they brought me here!" he laughed. "It needs more brains than I have yet seen evidence of in the kingdom of Calbaria to outplay Jack Derring! But how did you get here, Marna?"

"I can come and go as I please," said Miss Durkee.

"They think you're one of them, do they?" chuckled Dick. "Clever little girl! Who would suspect such brains in the head of the swineherd's daughter? But come! Enough! Fetch me my sword and my clothes!"

It was quite evident that the weakness Dick had shown was truly a trick. There was no weakness about him now. Miss Durkee, however, had had more than one patient with hallucinations and she was wiser than her pretty face indicated. Perhaps all nurses are wiser than their pretty faces indicate.

"Now?" she said, with pretended surprise. "But that wouldn't do at all, would it?"

Dick wrinkled his brow in thought. The poor brain that had built so many plots and plans to crowd the pages of the novel struggled with this. Evidently there must be a reason for not making a brave move at this time.

"The princess, of course!" he said suddenly.

"Of course," said Miss Durkee. "The princess!"

Dick's brain leaped to the work of plot building.

"She is locked in a dungeon cell and chained to the massive stones of its wall, of course," said Dick. "She is given nothing but bread and water. But she does not despair. She repulses every offer of freedom that requires her to wed Black Michael, for she has faith in the strong arm and quick wit of Jack Derring, stanch and true American. Unfortunately—"

"Yes. Unfortunately?" said Miss Durkee.

"Unfortunately," said Dick, "the Calbarians who guard her cell cannot be bribed. They must be drugged. And you, Marna, try as you may, have as yet been unable to drug them because you have no drugs to mix with the wine you serve them each day. Therefore, we must keep up this pretense that I am weak and helpless until some one can smuggle drugs to us. We are almost hopeless. Who, in all this accursed land, will raise a hand to aid Jack Derring in this hour of his need?"

Dick paused to let his brain suggest some one or something, but Miss Durkee heard the firm, sturdy tread of Doctor Blaisdell as he came along the corridor outside. Her quick wit suggested that her patient must not take a dislike to the physician in whose hands his cure lay.

"Why not Doctor Blaisdell?" asked Miss Durkee, answering the question Dick had asked himself.

"True!" said Dick, speaking like a page of his novel. "Doctor Blaisdell, the famous American scientist, is in Calbaria, seeking the cause of the deadly cojo disease, but where, among the thousand mountains of this frightful land, is he?"

"He is here," said Miss Durkee, as Doctor Blaisdell entered.

"Blaisdell! You, of all men!" cried Dick, putting out a welcoming hand. "Thank God, old friend, for you have come in the very nick of time!"

"Humph!" said Doctor Blaisdell dryly. "I think I have!"

CHAPTER VI.

VERY WELL, THEN, "BEHOLD OUR HERO"
IN ACTION

For a week Richard Vickers gave his nurse and Doctor Blaisdell but little trouble. As Jack Derring, he was playing a waiting game.

"We mustn't encourage him in his hallucinations," Doctor Blaisdell told Miss Durkee, "but until I arrange to remove him to the sanitarium, it may be as well not to irritate him. If he becomes suspicious of us, we may have to put him in a strait-jacket and that will be worse than playing up to him for a few days. A few days of this nonsense won't do any great harm."

Doctor Blaisdell, while still serving as general physician to the hospital, where he was chief of staff, had given up most of his private practice and was specializing in diseases of the brain and spinal column. Many of his patients he was able to treat at their homes, but cases like Dick Vickers—and Dick had no known home—he preferred to handle at the Westcote Sanitarium, where the facilities for guarding the patient were far better than in the hospital. Dick's case interested him exceedingly. It would have interested him far more if he had known that Dick imagined himself the hero of his own novel, but even without this interesting knowledge, he found the case worth study.

It was well worth his time in more ways than one, for not only did Mrs. Tutville continually repeat her assertion that she wished to spare no expense, but Miss Ellery was equally insistent that no expense should be spared. The two women could with difficulty be driven from the hospital, and every report of Dick's condition affected them equally. Mrs. Tutville's interest was based on her desire to see righted the evil she had done by telling James to speed her car without chains, but every one in the hospital speedily knew that Miss Ellery's interest was of another sort. The story went around that she and Dick had known each other since childhood and that they had been engaged since they were babes, and there was at least this basis for the stories—Bess Ellery was now deeply in love with Dick.

Mrs. Tutville recognized this, and she tacitly admitted that it gave the girl something like an equal proprietary right in Dick. Thus there arose the really remarkable situation that two ladies, one elderly and one young, were watching over the young man like mother and sweetheart when he did not know either of them from Adam, as the saying is. It was only as Jack Derring that he knew them, and as Jack Derring he hated and feared them both—Miss Ellery as a false, fair duchess, and Mrs. Tutville, poor lady, as the swineherd's wife.

Mrs. Tutville, notwithstanding that she knew her victim was not in his right mind, was decidedly annoyed because he insisted on calling her the swineherd's wife. Miss Ellery, while distressed to be thought "false," accepted the title of duchess without complaining, but Mrs. Tutville felt that even a disordered mind should certainly know better than to think she was the wife of a swineherd. She came to the hospital often and took pains to wear the very finest of her gowns and even went so far as to put on many of her jewels, but they did not impress the patient in the least. He spoke often of her "poor rags."

To a haughty woman like Mrs. Tutville, this was extremely distressing. While it is true that a romantic author must mix strong colors and use raw adjectives and nouns, it was anything but pleasant to a lady president of the Aid Society to be continually addressed as "hag," "wrinkled hag," "old hag," "swine wife," and "beldame." These seemed to be the hero's favorite names for her, and when, occasionally, he called her by another name, it was worse. As our hero was supposed to be lying low and hiding his real feelings, Mrs. Tutville trembled to think what he might call her when he really let-himself loose. She often returned home in a most unhappy state of mind.

An hour or two at the hospital wore her nerves far more than a week of squabbling with the ladies of the Aid Society. She would reach her home so nerve-racked that she actually felt like blaming poor Mr. Tutville, as if he were really a swineherd and had brought all this on her by marrying her.

"But, aunt," Betty Field said, "if it makes you feel so badly to go to the hospital, why do you go? They'll take perfectly good care of him. He doesn't know you, and seeing you probably stirs up his hallucination. Surely that girl who has fallen in love with him will see that he lacks nothing he ought to have. You've certainly done all that your duty calls for you to do. Please don't go there again!"

"Betty is right," said Mr. Tutville meekly.

"You! What do you know about it?" snapped Mrs. Tutville, and poor Mr. Tutville subsided like a punctured bubble.

He was a meek little man with cozy little side whiskers and inclined to cough gently behind his hand before making any violent statement, such as that it was a warm day. He was one of the first men in America to wear rubber heels, and took a great pride in this fact. He was almost as proud because he neither smoked, drank, chewed, or used snuff. Most of all, he was proud because Mrs. Tutville was his wife. He often spoke of her as "queenly." Not infrequently, when he exasperated her more than usual by his meekness, she spoke of him as a "worm." I might instance the occasions when she sent him to the gas office, and he returned without having a deduction made from the bill. This happened every month. Then she would say:

"You poor worm!"

She believed he was afraid of men, women, and even children, and she was not far wrong.

"If it wasn't for me, Mr. Tutville," the wife said, "you would be robbed right and left, and I haven't the least doubt you would end by being a swineherd."

That was when the "swineherd's wife" was getting on her nerves. The good lady, regardless of all this, continued to do all she could for the victim of her automobile, and several times she volunteered to carry Miss Ellery from the hospital to Wayside. On one of these occasions, she stopped at her own home on her way, and Miss Ellery met Betty Field. The two young women had a long talk about the patient.

"It's so nice that you happened to know him," said Betty. "I think men are so helpless always, and when they're sick or wounded, they do need us so! I saw so much of it in France. Aunt Eleanor says you love this Mr. Derring—"

Bess Ellery colored.

"I—well, I do!" she said. "Why shouldn't I?"

"I think it's splendid that you do," said Betty. She sighed. "You don't know, Bess—may I call you that?—that I have some one somewhere that I'm waiting for. I often hope he has some one like you to be kind to him if he is sick or hurt."

Her eyes filled with tears.

"He's in Europe, or was when I saw him last. It's all so horrible over there that I scream in my sleep sometimes. I dream he is wounded or killed—such awful dreams!"

"Poor girl!" said Bess sympathetically. "Listen, Betty, why don't you do something to keep your mind off it all? Why don't you come to the hospital with your aunt?"

"Oh, not that!" exclaimed Betty. "Anything but a hospital! My dear, if you knew what I have seen in Paris!"

Bess could imagine, if she did not know. She had, too, her own idea of

men in general and her opinion of a man who would let years elapse without sending some word to the girl he pretended to love. "Steamer flirtation," was the thought that came into her mind, and that was sufficient to account for everything, even if Betty's Dick had not been killed in some obscure European affray.

"What this really nice girl needs," she thought, "is a lively boy to make love to her for a while until she's herself again," and she immediately thought of her own brother Jack, who carried his love in his eyes and made it to any girl they happened to light upon.

She got him on the telephone as soon as she reached her home, and the next day she dumped him from her car at Mrs. Tutville's and left him to amuse Betty.

Jack Ellery was in exactly the right mood for the work Bess had in mind, and needed no spur. The row he had had with his parents had shaken him up and opened his eyes a little, and he had made up his mind that another such row would leave him the family outcast, without a penny of his own and with no visible means of getting any pennies. The time had come, he had decided, to find the right girl and marry her. The moment he saw sweet Betty Field, he knew that she was the right girl, and he began his love-making with a rush, as was his habit, but this time he meant it seriously. For the first half hour, he amused Betty, his love-making was so frank, but she could not avoid seeing that he was in earnest, and she was like other girls; love-making, if it is in earnest, is at least interesting to them and is borne more patiently than utter indifference.

The few days she had spent at her Aunt Eleanor's, waiting for Dick, seemed longer than the years she had spent in Paris, where her time had been so fully occupied. In spite of her loy-

alty, she began to doubt whether Dick would ever come for her or send her a word. His novel had not appeared; possibly he was dead. Certainly Jack Ellery was a charming fellow.

One morning, a week after Dick Vickers had been carried into the Westcote Hospital, he was sleeping in his bed. Miss Durkee glanced at him to see that he was sleeping and went to the door of the room, for she heard Mr. Acker in the corridor. The moment she stepped outside, Dick opened his eyes, blinked, and yawned silently. Then Miss Durkee's voice reached his ears.

"If Mr. Derring is going to be moved this afternoon," she was saying, "I think you'd better have his clothes sent up. It's a rather long trip, and if he happens to make a struggle to get away, it wouldn't be so unpleasant if he were dressed."

"I'll have them sent up," said Mr. Acker. "But I don't think he'll make any trouble. You ought to be able to make him think he's going to the princess. Tell him that the only way it can be managed is to take him in the ambulance. He has full confidence in you, hasn't he?"

"Yes, he trusts me," said Miss Durkee.

"Fair and false!" muttered Dick. "Enemies and traitors beset me on every side! You, too, Marna, in whom I placed my faith!"

"The ambulance will be ready in half an hour," said Mr. Acker. "The mechanics are here from the city to repair the laundry, and I'm just going to the basement to set them to work. I'll get his clothes as soon as I'm through with the men."

"Don't bother, Mr. Acker," said Miss Durkee. "He's asleep, and I can run down and get them in a moment."

"You might as well," said Mr. Acker and, after a glance at Dick, Miss Dur-

kee sped away on her rubber-soled shoes.

The moment Miss Durkee was out of hearing, Dick jumped out of bed. He knew he had but a moment in which to defeat this new plot of the King of Calbaria. He had no garment, but the hospital shirt that barely reached to his knees, but he dragged from the bed the gray double blanket and threw it around his shoulders. He looked into the corridor and, seeing no one, glided quickly to the door that led to the stairs that wound downward around the elevator shaft.

The stairs and elevator were located at the rear of the narrow building, opening alike on the entrance corridor and the receiving platform. At the foot of the stairs, Dick hesitated. A covered wagon was backed up to the receiving platform, and he heard voices somewhere below where he stood, but he heard more voices in the corridor. In the wagon were great sacks of something. His common sense and his eyes told him that this must be soiled linen going to the laundry. He crossed the platform in three steps, scrambled over the tops of the bags, and burrowed down among them. A moment later, the laundryman and an orderly threw another great bag into the wagon.

"That'll do for one trip," said the laundryman. "These springs ain't what they was once."

"Be back again this morning?" asked the orderly.

"No, I guess not. Not till afternoon, Joe."

He pushed the rear doors of the wagon shut, climbed to his seat, and urged the horse into motion. The wagon wheels ground the gravel of the drive, then began thumping the macadam roadway. Dick Vickers raised his head. The driver was bent forward, his hands on his knees, tapping the old horse lightly with his whip. Very cautiously Dick worked his way from be-

tween the bags of laundry to the gates of the wagon. He saw the walls of the castle of the King of Calbaria—the Westcote Hospital—receding in the distance.

"Whoa up!" said the driver suddenly.

The wagon stopped. Whatever might happen, now was the time when brave Jack Derring, stanch and true American, must make his escape! Of what might happen he had no fear. Once out in the open world again, a sword would be found—Jack Derring had always found a sword when he needed one—and with a sword in his hand, he did not fear a million. Romantic heroes never do. He pushed open the gates of the laundry wagon and dropped lightly to the road.

Instantly a hand was placed on his shoulder.

"What you doing here?" said an irritated, angry voice. "God! What a lot of boneheads! Get over there where you belong!"

The man had come around the end of the laundry wagon just as Dick's feet touched the ground. He was a perspiring man in shirt sleeves, a battered straw hat on the back of his head. He gave Dick a push and rushed away, shouting as he went.

Then Dick saw a sight that filled his hero heart, for a moment, with anxiety. It was as if the people of the capital of Calbaria were gathering for the annual national fête. In the street were soldiers, a file of forty or more, armed with carbines and with a flag at their head. They were mounted on horses. Along the sidewalks were gathered boys and girls and some men and women, and on the porches of the houses on one side of the street were other boys and girls and men and women. All were staring across the road, which was obstructed by automobiles, a farm wagon or two, and a long file of covered prairie schooners.

Dick looked at the other side of the road. Here were no horses, but an undeveloped tract with a few clumps of bushes and a tree or two. In one corner stood a group of wigwams, and near them half a hundred men and women, painted like Indians, in blankets or war toggery, sat, stood, or walked about. It was no place for an escaping man! Dick put his hand on the gate of the wagon.

Before he could climb in and hide himself among the bags, the perspiring man in the bad straw hat came by shouting, "Calthorp! Where's Calthorp?" and as he caught sight of Dick again, he stopped short and swore a short, but violent oath.

"— infernal boneheads!" he ended. "Do you call that a get-up for a war Indian?" he demanded of Dick. "Mike, who let this idiot come up to the location in this rig? The crazy fool has nothing on his legs! Where's his war paint? Calthorp will drive me crazy yet! Where is he?"

"He went back to the studio in his car, Mr. Blay," said the man who was evidently Mike.

"He did, did he?" cursed Blay. "I suppose he thinks he has nothing to do but joy ride around this town while the Unequaled Motion Picture Company is paying about one hundred dollars a minute to these ham actors! Look at this light going to waste, and not an inch of reel being made! Here, you take this bonehead back to the studio with you. I've got enough Indians without him. I don't want to be pinched for his bare legs. And you tell Calthorp I want him up here in three minutes, or he's fired!"

He turned to Dick.

"Get into that car!" he ordered.

Mike leaped into the car and set the motor going, and Dick climbed in beside him. The car wove a snake's path and straightened out at a neat, illegal thirty-five miles an hour.

"Blay goes plumb crazy when he's directin' a big feature," said Mike. "You got to make allowances. But honest, bo, whoever sent you to location rigged up that way was nutty! Did Calthorp see you before you went up?"

Dick did not answer.

"You must be a green hand at the business," said Mike. "After this, you remember you've got to show yourself to Calthorp before you leave for location or somethin' like this is goin' to happen to you again. If I wouldn't help you, you would have your trip out from the city for nothin', an' pay your own car fare, but the Unequaled ain't nothin' to me. I'll put you wise to how you can get your five dollars pay, bo. You go down cellar when you get to the studio, see? Get into your clothes an' hang around until the rest of the gang comes back from location, an' then you line up with the rest an' get your pay, see? All right! Here we are!"

Mike leaped from the car and entered the old frame building, leaving Dick to follow. Dick walked boldly across the walk and no one stopped him. He entered the studio and looked about him. There was but one door that could be the cellar door, and he opened it and went down the stairs. There were numerous lockers, piles of properties. There were doors that led to dressing rooms, chalked with the names of stars. A watchman sat on a chair, smoking a pipe.

"In there, you!" he said, without rising, and Dick entered a room made of rough boards. Here were garments hung in rows on the walls, and he threw off his blanket and shirt and garbed himself. He chose a pair of shoes that fit him well enough and a hat that was nearly his size. Then he went out.

"Here, you!" said the watchman. "What name?"

Dick looked at him scornfully. It was not thus one should address a hero.

"You know my name well, base-born menial!" he said. "Behold, since you will have it from my lips, Jack Derring, American stanch and true!"

He strode up the stairs haughtily, and the watchman looked after him, holding the check list of names in his hand.

"Another of them supes that's got the idee they're cut out to be stars!" he said scornfully, and then he put a check mark against the name of James Deeming on his list and began puffing his pipe again comfortably.

CHAPTER VII.

"BEHOLD OUR HERO" CLOTHED.

Richard Vickers left the motion-picture studio fully clothed and in his wrong mind. Already the alarm had been given by Miss Durkee at the hospital, and Mr. Acker had telephoned for Doctor Blaisdell. Every available individual in the hospital began a search for the lost patient, for it was believed he could not have left the building, although it was well known to Mr. Acker and Miss Probst that patients with disordered minds were frequently exceedingly wily and shrewd.

There was good reason for the belief that Vickers was still in the building. The doorman at the front door had been at his post continuously; the cook and her helpers had been in the kitchen; two internes and a nurse had been in the dispensary waiting room. There was only one other door by which Vickers could have escaped, and the orderly who had been helping the laundryman load his wagon asserted most positively that the patient could not have gone out by that door. Quite a little time was lost, therefore, because of the thorough search given the rooms and hiding places in the hospital.

Even when it was decided that Dick

was not in the hospital, almost super-human care was taken to prevent his speedy capture. More than anything else Mr. Acker dreaded a scandal in connection with the hospital, and any report that a madman had escaped and was running loose in the town would be just that. The sketchy manner in which Dick had been garbed when he had left the hospital seemed a reason for his speedy recognition, and when the police had been notified to be on the watch for a man dressed in practically nothing, Mr. Acker felt he had done all that was required.

Richard Vickers, therefore, as he stood outside the studio, was in no immediate danger of capture. His heart leaped with joy as he felt that he was free. He put his hands in his pockets—which were the pockets of some other man—and felt money there. Eighty-nine cents! With his head high and his eyes clear, he threw back his shoulders and breathed deep of the air of Westcote, which, for the moment, was to him the air of the capital city of Calbaria.

"Gee!" said a girl, passing, to her comrade. "There's one of them movie stars. Ain't he handsome!"

"Gee, yes!" said her companion.

And Dick was handsome. The fighting spirit shone in every line of him, for he was Jack Derring, free and ready for the fray; he was Jack Derring, American stanch and true, ready to rescue his princess. He buttoned some other man's coat over his broad chest and walked to the corner and swung lightly aboard a passing street car.

The car was bound for New York, and already Jack Derring had formed a plan of action. To a hero of romance, it meant little or nothing that he could get on a street car in the capital city of Calbaria and land, in an hour or so, in New York. In a novel, the journey from Calbaria to New

York and back can be covered in a few seconds: "Our hero, finding it necessary to consult the pawnbroker in New York, took passage on the fastest ship and was back in Calbaria before the princess had suffered severely from her captivity." To spend an entire hour in going from Calbaria to New York was really a waste of time.

The plan our hero had evolved was indeed a good one. He knew well that every minion of the King of Calbaria would be on the lookout for Jack Derring, and that Black Michael's assassins' daggers would be ready behind every tree. For the moment, Jack Derring was helpless. It was no time to leap openly into action, but a time for cleverness and finesse. His enemies must be thrown off the trail. It was a time for masquerade and deceit.

Nothing simpler! Jack Derring, American stanch and true, must disappear from Calbaria. He was now disappearing, in a street car with one flat wheel that thumped along the rail. Very good! His flight would be reported by the spies at the border. The glad tidings—"Jack Derring has abandoned his task and has fled"—would be carried to the king, and there would be rejoicing in the evil circles of the court of Calbaria. Suspicion would be lulled.

At Long Island City, Jack Derring stepped down from the street car. In the middle of Jackson Avenue, a traffic policeman stood directing the traffic right and left, and to him Jack Derring stepped. Undoubtedly this was the customs officer at the border of the kingdom of Calbaria.

"Officer," said Jack Derring, "my name is Jack Derring. You can tell your superior I am going back to New York."

"G'wan!" said the policeman.

A Forty-second Street car stood waiting, and Jack Derring entered it and was carried across the Queensboro

bridge into Manhattan. At the Manhattan end of the bridge, he left the car and darted hastily into Sixtieth Street. He stood in a saloon doorway until he was sure he was not being spied upon, and then walked hastily toward Third Avenue. For an hour he walked, turning abruptly to retrace his steps, slipping around corners, resting in doorways, until he was sure any possible spy was thrown off his track; and then he walked straight to the hotel where, as Richard Vickers, he had taken a room on his arrival in New York. He walked straight to the clerk's desk and said, looking him firmly in the eye:

"I am Richard Vickers."

His plan was simplicity itself. As Jack Derring, he had known he resembled closely a poor American author named Richard Vickers. He believed this resemblance was sufficiently close to permit him to masquerade as Richard Vickers. As Richard Vickers, he would return to Calbaria. The king and Black Michael would not suspect the poor American author, and as Richard Vickers, Jack Derring could plot and plan for the rescue of the princess unobstructed. It was an admirable idea; it would work splendidly in any romantic novel.

"Yes, Mr. Vickers," said the clerk promptly. "You want the package you left with me? There's some mail, too."

The mail was three fat bundles of manuscript and printer's proof and a letter from Sam Roach urging Vickers to read the proofs and return them as soon as possible. Our hero took these and the package containing the money he had deposited with the clerk and went to his room. Here his first act was to change his clothes. With ample money in his pocket, he went out upon the street and sought a clothing store.

He found one, and as he looked in its window as he passed, he saw a display that solved the one difficulty

he had felt. The window was full of military uniforms and accoutrements of various sorts. Dick Vickers, appearing in Calbaria as a mere author, might be suspect; Dick Vickers appearing as a military attaché would be free from suspicion. He entered the clothing shop and bought a complete outfit for a captain of the National Guard of New York. As he stood before the mirror, he felt that Jack Derring, American stanch and true, had never looked more the hero.

It was necessary, he felt, that some time should elapse before he appeared again in Calbaria, and he returned to the hotel prepared to spend a week in inaction. He opened the packages of manuscript, feeling sure his old friend Dick Vickers would not object, and looked at the first sheets of proofs idly. Instantly his interest was attracted. He had expected some mere fiction stuff, but what he saw was history—the story of himself! It was the true story of Jack Derring's fight for the rights of the princess, told in romance form, it is true, but with every important detail written out.

As the poor, befuddled author read his own work, his heart swelled at the words of praise Dick Vickers had written about Jack Derring. Here and there he thought he observed inaccuracies and he made corrections. He spent the afternoon going over the proofs, and mailed the first batch to Mr. Roach that evening, sending them with a letter that said:

"I inclose proofs. I have gone over them for my dear friend, Dick Vickers, and have made a few corrections."

He signed this "Jack Derring," and Mr. Roach smiled when he received the letter. Authors, when successful, were often playful in their correspondence, and it seemed nothing out of the way for this author to sign his hero's name.

For a week Jack Derring was busy working over Dick Vickers' proofs.

That no Dick Vickers came to the room did not bother him. With a novelist's easy facility for invention, he decided that Dick Vickers had gone to California. At the end of the week, the hotel presented a bill and Jack Derring paid it.

"Good old Dick!" he said to himself. "What is his is mine, and what is mine is his!"

This was far more true than he imagined, since he and Dick were the same. What he meant was that Dick would not complain if Jack Derring used Dick's name and property as his own. This touching quality in friends is often found in novels. I can't say I have met with it to any great extent in real life.

CHAPTER VIII.

"BEHOLD OUR HERO" IN DISGUISE.

As the week following Jack Derring's flight from the Westcote Hospital passed and no trace of the patient was discovered, Mr. Acker became greatly agitated. Mrs. Tutville and Bess Ellery were by no means complacent in the matter. They insisted that everything be done to find Jack Derring that money could pay for, and they were most unpleasant in their remarks about Mr. Acker, Miss Probst, Miss Durkee, and every one connected with the hospital. Mrs. Tutville declared that if the poor young man were not found, she would stop her donations to the hospital and use all her influence to have Mr. Acker, Miss Probst, and every one then in charge turned out. Miss Ellery behaved like a distracted sweetheart. When she was not scolding, she was weeping. They were miserable days at the hospital.

Doctor Blaisdell alone remained calm.

"One of two things has happened or will happen," he said to Mrs. Tutville. "The young man has been out of his

head. If he has had a sudden return of reason, we have nothing to fear; he will go about his normal affairs again in a normal manner, and we can consider our case brought to a successful conclusion."

"And a lot of good that will do me!" cried Miss Ellery. "If he has returned to normal, as you call it, will he ever think of me again?"

"I'm afraid he may not," said Doctor Blaisdell. "You came into his mind when he was not himself. Now that he is himself, you may have slipped back into the dim memories of his past. So far as you are concerned, Miss Ellery, the second and more likely of the possibilities would be best. If he has not recovered his normal mind, we will see him in Westcote again before long."

"Oh, do you think so? Why, doctor?" asked Miss Ellery eagerly.

"Because," said the doctor, "he thinks he is called upon to rescue some princess in distress. He believes his princess is here; therefore, he will come here. How he managed to get away I cannot imagine, but I firmly believe that he will come back. Your detectives have heard nothing, Mrs. Tutville?"

"Not a thing!" exclaimed that lady. The detectives she had hired had indeed made but little real progress. They had questioned Mrs. Tutville regarding the accident, and had examined every one in the hospital and the hospital itself, but it must be admitted that the clews were exceedingly slight. They traced the clothes to the shop where Dick had bought them, but, as he had taken them away himself, they ran against a dead wall there.

In all the enormous pother thus stirred up about her lover, Betty Field was the only person directly concerned who showed no interest.

"But, Aunt Eleanor," she said, "you've done all that is necessary!"

You've hired detectives and you've kept Mr. Acker jumping like a frog on a skillet. Please don't worry about it this way."

"But, my dear," said Mrs. Tutville, "I'm responsible. If your Uncle Michael were anything but a poor worm—"

"My dear Eleanor!" begged Mr. Tutville. "When detectives cannot do anything, pray what can I do?"

"Detectives!" cried Mrs. Tutville. "If only you were a man, Michael!"

Mr. Tutville retired behind his newspaper and remained there until Mrs. Tutville left the room. Then he spoke to Betty.

"Your aunt is a fine woman, Betty," he said, "but she is not always fair. I feel, sometimes, as if she were a little lacking in the finer spirit of kindness. She means well—"

He was interrupted by an exclamation from Betty, who had taken up the paper he had put down.

"What, my dear?" he asked.

"Nothing. Just something I saw here," she said.

But it was something. It was a publisher's "blurb," announcing the early publication of the most thrilling, most tremendous, most wonderful romantic novel yet published in the known world.

"Samuel Roach," said the item, "announces the early publication of a novel from the pen of Richard Chance Vickers, who recently returned from a long stay in the Balkans, where he—"

There followed half a column in praise of Vickers and his book. Betty put down the paper and went to her room, where she sat on the edge of her bed a long while, thinking of Dick. He was in America; he had been in America long enough to arrange for the publication of his novel, and the novel was soon to appear. From what he had told her on the ship, she believed that at least six months were usual between the signing of the contract and the pub-

lication of a book. Then Dick must have been in America, she argued, the better half of a year, and he had made no attempt to find her. She was angry because she was hurt. Jack Ellery was not a lover of that sort!

Her first impulse was to drop Dick from her mind then and there, but she decided to give him one chance. There might be a good reason for his waiting, if he had not forgotten her. She called up the office of Mr. Roach and asked for him.

"This is a friend of Mr. Vickers," she said, trying to keep her voice emotionless. "Can you tell me whether he is in America now?"

"Indeed he is!" said Mr. Roach cheerfully, and he gave the name and address of the hotel where Dick was stopping.

"Thank you!" said Betty. "That is all."

It was indeed all. Dick was in New York, and he had not even bothered to telephone her Aunt Eleanor to ask about her! Jack Ellery telephoned two or three times a day and came to the house almost as often. She went downstairs thinking:

"If Jack Ellery asks me anything tonight, I won't say no."

As she said this, Dick Vickers, alias Jack Derring, American stanch and true, was aboard a Westcote trolley car, bound for Westcote, alias the capital of Calbaria, to rescue the princess.

He was a fine figure in his uniform, and more than one soldier saluted him as he passed. His khaki fitted him well. He longed for a sword, but no one seemed to wear swords. He stepped from the car when it reached Westcote, and saw, flashing past him in a motor car, the Princess of Calbaria!

He recognized her instantly and his heart leaped. He felt for his sword, but he had none. It was a moment for prompt, decisive action. Some

minion of the king was bearing the princess away at a rate of not less than twenty miles an hour, and unless Jack Derring acted instantly, she might be lost forever, incarcerated in some black dungeon. With Jack Derring, to think was to act. A worn, but serviceable automobile runabout stood at the curb, and he leaped into the seat and threw open the throttle.

Unfortunately the car did not leap forward in pursuit. It may be that the throttle is not the thing to throw open in a motor car, but the car stood still. Jack Derring, American stanch and true, cursed romantically under his breath.

"Black Michael's work!" he exclaimed. "He has tampered with this!"

He pushed and pulled the available levers and touched one button and another. Suddenly the car shot forward at great and unexpected speed. It shot the full distance of two feet and brought up with a bump against a butcher's wagon, with a crash of crumpled mud guards and broken lamps.

"Curse Black Michael and all his brood!" cried Jack Derring, and he leaped from the car and hurried around the corner. It was well. The owner of the car came from the shop and saw its imperfect condition. He gave it one glance, looked up and down the street, and darted around the corner. He saw only a fine-looking military man looking at a window that contained small jewelry. Jack Derring gave the fellow one haughty glance, and the man turned away. He later collected ten dollars from the butcher for letting his wagon back into the automobile.

Assured by this that Black Michael's man—for so he quite naturally imagined the automobile owner to be—did not guess that he was Jack Derring, but thought he was Dick Vickers, Jack Derring walked slowly up the street, feeling quite safe. He had put his disguise to the test and had not been dis-

covered. All Calbaria, including his ancient enemies, must believe he was Dick Vickers.

No doubt, he argued, the princess was being taken to the castle of the king, where he had been incarcerated in the pretended hospital. His next act must therefore be that of any romantic hero in his position. He must proceed to the king's castle and present the credentials he had so carefully forged, and be accepted as Richard Vickers, military attaché. He felt in his pocket for the papers, found they were still there, and started toward the hospital at a brisk pace.

He had no doubt as to how he would proceed. When he approached the castle door, he would throw back his shoulders, acknowledge the salute of the guard, and mount the wide marble stairs. At the head of the stairs, the major-domo would receive him, glance at his papers, and lead him to the chancellor. The chancellor would look at the papers, announce that they were in proper form, and lead him to the throne room. Here the king would be sitting on the throne, and Jack Derring would walk between the long rows of retainers and soldiers—who would be evil looking, and more like bandits than like soldiers. The chancellor would present him as Captain Richard Vickers, and the king would bid him welcome to Calbaria. The duchess, casting a glare of suspicion at him, would whisper a word to the queen, and the queen would whisper in the king's ear these words: "Beware of that man, your majesty! I distrust him!"

"Hold your peace!" the king would say angrily. "Since Jack Derring escaped from the castle so marvelously, in spite of all our precautions, you have feared every shadow. Bother me not with your old wives' fears. Richard Vickers, captain of the Seventh Regiment, New York National Guard, I welcome you to Calbaria."

At this point Jack Derring would bend low, to hide the triumph in his eyes, and kiss the king's scrawny hand, "but with a qualm of disgust." He would then be led to the sumptuous quarters prepared for him and be able to plan his further actions.

It is to be doubted whether this is exactly the way Mr. Acker would have received him if he had actually reached the hospital, but he did not reach it. Midway he stopped, for before the studio of the Unequalled Motion Picture Company stood a small, bright runabout, the very one that had carried the princess, and in it sat the man who had been at the wheel when the car had flashed past Jack Derring. The man was seated on the small of his back, smoking a cigarette. Dick approached him and saluted.

"Captain Richard Vickers, at your service," he said. "I am a stranger here—"

Instantly Jack Ellery's manner changed. This was undoubtedly the Dick Vickers Betty Field was waiting for—if she was waiting for him now. In any event, this was Betty's Dick, returned from the Balkans and undoubtedly come for her. Jack Ellery put out his hand and greeted the long-lost lover with pretended warmth.

"Why, hello!" he exclaimed. "Know all about you, old chap—all about your book and everything."

He thought quickly. That uniform would be pretty sure to make a big hit with Betty, little patriot that she was, and there was no telling how the mere return of Vickers might affect her. He saw now that he had been a fool not to press Betty for an answer. If he had only secured her "yes!" If he could only secure it before she saw Dick Vickers in this khaki uniform that all the girls were so crazy about!

"Get in, old chap," he urged Dick. "My name is Jack Ellery."

If he could only manage to drop Dick

somewhere—anywhere but here in front of the studio—he thought, he might run the car back and pick up Betty and get that "yes" as he was taking her home. Minutes were precious now. If he could have a few minutes alone with Betty before she saw Dick, he believed he could get the word from her that would make it impossible, or at least very difficult, for Dick to change her mind. He might run the car out Jamaica way and have a breakdown—a pretended one—and leave Dick sitting in the car while he went to a garage, hired a taxi, and hurried back for Betty.

But Dick did not get into the car.

"Jump in," urged Jack Ellery. "It'll be an hour before they're through in there."

"An hour?" said Jack Derring. "Kingdoms have been lost in an hour; fair ladies, too."

"I know what you mean," laughed Jack Ellery, "but the fair lady you refer to is not going to leave except with me, so you can be easy. Get in. Let me show you how the little car can trot."

"What goes on in there?" asked Jack Derring.

"In there? Some sort of craziness Adelia Finch got up. Movie stuff. She has half the swells in town in there doing a ball scene. They're filming a movie thriller, and little Adelia gave birth to the big idea of having the town swells do the ball scene, instead of using ham actors as usual. Then she's going to have it shown at the Westcote Palace and charge the swells half a dollar a head to see how they look on the screen. All for the First Aid Fund, you know. Have a cigarette?"

"No, thank you," said Jack Derring, and then: "Movie show! Swells! Clever idea, on my word!"

Jack Ellery thought this sounded sarcastic, but how could he guess that poor

Dick Vickers thought it was an invention of this glib minion of the king?

"Movie, forsooth!" Jack Derring cried, and in two strides he was across the walk.

"Here! Come back!" Jack Ellery called, and then he jumped out of his car and followed.

CHAPTER IX.

"BEHOLD OUR HERO" CONQUERING.

There is nothing on earth that compares with a romantic novel except a romantic motion picture. Real life offers nothing equal to them, in spite of the maxim "Truth is stranger than fiction." Truth, when she gets to throwing backhand cartwheels, may be stranger than ordinary fiction, but in the long run, romantic fiction and the seven-reel movie have her distanced before she gets started.

The romance Dick Vickers' brain was compiling minute by minute and day by day, with its motley cast of kings, queens, swineherds' wives and daughters, princesses, duchesses, Black Michaels, and American heroes, was well matched by the photo play being filmed in the studio. In the seven reels were being crowded thrill after thrill, with a noble hero doing his best and a favorite movie queen suffering her worst. There were no kings and queens in the seven-reel thriller, because the motion-picture people have discovered that American actors look like perfect jackasses in crowns and kingly robes, but there was money nobility galore, and it is well known that the money nobility always reaches its climax and meets its sudden downfall in a ballroom. Whether the money king began life herding sheep or slaughtering trees in the timberland, he gets the cold steel of Fate in his ribs at a grand ball. The grander the ball, the fiercer the jab and the more tremendous the downfall. Therefore, the sweating director of the

Unequaled Motion Picture Company had planned a ball scene calculated to make all previous movie ball scenes look like raw amateur stuff.

To get the real spirit of a real ballroom, the director had astounded even himself by a brilliant thought. Instead of hiring a horde of extra people at about five dollars a head to dance in the grand ball scene, he would have genuine society men and women! Great idea! But how get them? Charity!

In Miss Adelia Finch, he found an eager and enthusiastic second. To Miss Finch, anything connected with the movies was mysterious and awe-compelling, and anything that would bring money to her First Aid was worthy. She pattered up to The Elms and enlisted Mrs. Tutville and that lady's man-killing limousine, and together they raged triumphantly about the streets and avenues of Westcote until they had worked the entire swell set into enthusiasm. "A great lark," was the universal opinion, and it was decided to make it a real ball, with a nice cold repast afterward.

The Unequaled Motion Picture Company attended to the stage setting, turning the whole studio into a great ballroom. Real diamonds and some genuine French ball gowns were there. It was a Westcote society event, a full-dress ball in the afternoon.

Not all those present were dancers. Mr. Acker, of the hospital, did not dance, but he wore a dress suit nicely and was welcome for that reason. Miss Probst did dance. Mr. Tutville did not dance, but he looked well carrying ices; he had a meek, gentle manner of presenting an ice that no hired movie actor could quite equal. Miss Durkee was entirely the dancer and a charming one. Bess Ellery danced dashing, her skirts not as much too short as you probably imagine they were. Even Mrs. Tutville danced, but only the square dances.

"Now, please all listen!" cried Mr.

Blay from the chair he was standing on after he had clapped his hands. "The first dance I'm going to give you is to be a trot. I want everybody to trot. Miss Darling and the count will dance with the rest of you, but don't any of you look at them, please. Just keep away from this space right in front of the camera. Robert Starbright will be in the balcony. Don't look up at him. All I want is for every one to dance as if you were at some pleasant ball and enjoying every minute of it.

"There will be a few minutes' rest between dances. Do just as you always do. Find your seats and chat and so on. The second dance will be a square dance. The camera will not begin to film you until you are all on the floor and dancing. Dance as if you were all having a good time and did not expect anything to happen. At some time during the dance I will shout: 'Robert! Shoot!' Starbright will be standing at the head of the grand stairway. He will fire his revolver over your heads. Miss Darling will drop as if killed. You will all turn your faces toward the grand stairway and move slightly to right or left, making a passage for Mr. Starbright down the middle of the studio. He will rush down the passage you leave open, and you will watch him, turning to follow him with your eyes. Look horrified, if possible. Do you understand all that?"

Mr. Blay waited for questions, but none came, and he cried, "All ready!" and waited a moment or two.

"Music!" he shouted, and the orchestra began playing.

"Camera!" he cried.

When the music ended, he stood on his chair again.

"That was fine," he shouted, so that all could hear, and then he repeated his directions for the square dance.

His amateur movie actors and ac-

tresses were excited and delighted. They laughed, talked, and beamed, and Mr. Blay ordered the camera turned on this group and on that, and then, suddenly, gave the signal for the square dance.

There was some scurrying for partners, but the sets were soon formed, and the music and the camera started. Mr. Blay, his eyes leaping here and there, sought to choose the best possible moment for his climax. Suddenly he shouted: "Robert! Shoot!" and at the top of the grand stairway that had been built at the far end of the stairway, the haughty picture star appeared, leveled his revolver, and shot. Instantly Miss Darling fell, the false count drew back appalled, and the dancers pressed back to make the passageway. Robert Starbright leaped down the stairs and ran toward the front of the studio, down the open passage prepared for him.

"Hell!" said Mr. Blay, with the utmost disgust.

The thing had to be done all over again. One of those confounded amateurs had spoiled the picture.

Mr. Sammy Dodd, reporter, dancing with Betty Field, had been too eager to see all that was going on and had missed a step, bringing his heel down hard on her foot, and Betty, falling, had dropped to the floor directly in the path prepared for Robert Starbright. It was most unfortunate. The eye of the camera saw, not Robert Starbright hurrying to Miss Darling, but Robert Starbright seemingly hurrying toward Betty Field; the camera's eyes saw Robert Starbright shoot, not Miss Darling, but—as it seemed—Betty Field.

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Blay.

Mrs. Tutville and her husband, the poor worm, sprang to lift Betty. Their only thought was that she had been shot because of some awful error in loading Robert Starbright's revolver. The tray Mr. Tutville had been carry-

ing clattered to the floor. Mr. Acker and Miss Probst ran toward Betty, who was holding her foot and groaning.

"Stop! Everybody back to your places!" cried Mr. Blay wildly, but it was too late. In at the front door of the studio burst brave Jack Derring, American stanch and true, with Jack Ellery at his heels. Our hero stood one moment. In that moment he saw all that has just been related. He saw the court of Calbaria in a revel of dancing; he saw one of the king's hired bravos appear at the head of the grand royal stairway and fire a revolver; he saw his princess drop to the floor; he heard Bray shout and saw the swineherd's wife and the king and queen bend over the princess, and he knew what to do. Up the floor he strode, his eye flashing and his brow dark, a magnificent figure in his khaki, and he raised one hand high in the air.

"Back!" he shouted in a voice that made the studio echo. "Stand back! Touch not one hair of yonder lady's head or death shall be your portion!"

Betty Field, moaning over her poor instep, raised her head at the sound of that voice. She struggled to her feet.

"Richard Vickers!" she exclaimed.

"No, not Richard Vickers, but Jack Derring, American stanch and true!" cried our hero. "Be of brave heart, princess. Though I be but one against all the wretches of Calbaria, the victory will be mine! Ho, murderer!"

He said this, and in no gentle manner, to the famous picture star, Robert Starbright. He accompanied it with a good right-hander to the jaw, as he reached for the amazed actor's revolver; and Richard Starbright went down like a log, with a thump that could be heard all over the studio. In a flash our hero passed the revolver to his good right hand, and "Bang!" a perfectly good blank cartridge sent its wad against the white shirt of Mr.

Acker, who gave one shout and went leaping toward the grand stairway. Our hero's left hand was enough for Sammy Dodd, who went backward. The swineherd's wife, good Mrs. Tutville, gasped twice and went to the floor in a fainting fit, and our hero's left slapped Miss Probst and sent her reeling. It was unchivalrous, but we must remember that she was not Miss Probst to our hero, but only the Queen of Calbaria.

In an instant, the entire fashionable coterie of Westcote was fleeing to far corners of the studio and, over the prostrate form of the princess, our hero and Black Michael, enemies from the first chapter of "The Lost Princess" to this moment, stood face to face. Mr. Tutville, unaware that he was Black Michael, the deadly enemy of this violent young man, stooped and picked up the tray, with some idea of using it as a shield. He held it before his face with both hands, and our hero laughed a mocking laugh and aimed the revolver.

Five reports echoed and five blank-cartridge wads simultaneously rang against the resonant tray as if our hero had hit the bull's-eye five times in quick succession. But before he could wrest the tray from before Black Michael's face, Bess Ellery leaped forward and threw an arm around our hero's neck. Black Michael raised the tray and brought the edge down upon our hero's head, and poor Dick Vickers doubled over and fell to the floor, his head in the lap of Betty Field.

"Uncle! How could you?" she cried. "It's my Dick!"

"What's all this row?" shouted Mr. Blay, running up.

"It's just a poor man who's out of his mind," said Bess Ellery. "Jack, help him. We'll take him to the hospital. They may have killed him."

Betty scrambled to her feet.

"Let me take him, Bess. Uncle, help

some one carry him to Aunt Eleanor's car. He's my Dick, Bess."

"Your Dick indeed!" exclaimed Bess Ellery. "He's nobody's Dick, if you please! He's Jack Derring! He's the Jack Derring I told you about, Betty."

"Well, that's absolute nonsense!" said Betty. "I ought to know him, I imagine!"

"Pardon me, my dear," said Bess Ellery, "but really!"

"Well, whoever he is," said Mr. Blay, "get him out of here. I want to get on with this ball scene. He's done enough damage already."

From this it will be seen that the romantic hero, when performing no more than the deeds a romantic hero performs through chapter after chapter of a novel, is decidedly not a pleasant person to have running loose in real life.

CHAPTER X.

"BEHOLD OUR HERO" TAMED.

Dick Vickers opened his eyes in a pleasant room with soft yellow walls and large windows. At the side of his bed stood Doctor Blaisdell, and near at hand Miss Durkee awaited the physician's orders. Dick, looking up, saw first the pretty face of the nurse he had so recently imagined to be the swineherd's daughter. He saw her white uniform and cap and then looked at Doctor Blaisdell. He put up a hand and felt his head, which was once more bandaged.

"Hello!" he said. "I must have got a good bump. This is a hospital, isn't it?"

He let his eyes turn to the window, through which he saw the brilliant colors of a sunset.

"I must have been here several hours," he said. "Some bump on the head! You my doctor?"

"I am," said Doctor Blaisdell. "How do you feel?"

"Fine as silk," said Dick. "That cab

thing knocked me out, did it? Well, I'm much obliged for all this, doctor, but I am myself again now. I'll get up, if you don't mind. Can the young lady nurse get my clothes?"

"In one minute, Mr. Derring," said the doctor.

"Mr. Who?" asked Dick. "Did you say Derring? Have I been babbling in my sleep? Honest, doctor, did I call myself Derring? I did? That's a good one! Why, doctor, Jack Derring is the hero of a novel I wrote. Some hero, too! Believe me, doctor, if I ever really thought I was Jack Derring and did one-tenth of the things he does in my novel, you'd lock me up in a madhouse."

"That is quite possible," said Doctor Blaisdell.

He took Dick's hand and counted his pulse.

"Quite normal again, Miss Durkee," he said. "I think you may ask Mr. Acker for his clothes."

He said no more until Miss Durkee was out of the room.

"You're all right now," he said then. "Nothing the matter with you but a sore spot on your cranium, I imagine. I'd better tell you, though, Mr.——"

"Vickers," said Dick.

"I'd better tell you, Mr. Vickers," said the doctor, "that you've been out of your head for two weeks or more."

"You don't mean it!"

"Just that!" said the doctor. "You imagined you were Jack Derring. You thought certain persons you saw were the Queen of Calbaria, and the king, and the swineherd's wife, and so on. I'm telling you this because you may find it a little annoying in some ways. Especially——"

"Especially what?" asked Dick anxiously.

"Especially as far as it concerns a young lady you called the duchess."

"False and fair?" asked Dick.

"You frequently referred to her as

that," said the doctor stolidly. "The young lady you called the duchess is a certain Miss Ellery—Miss Bess Ellery."

"Ellery?" questioned Dick blankly.

"You don't remember her? Can you recall ever having heard that name or having met any one by that name?"

"Never! No, I never heard that name."

"Or Eller? Did you ever know any one called Bess Eller?"

"Bess Eller? No, I never knew any one named that."

"It was the first name you mentioned when you spoke after the accident. You seemed to call for her."

"Bess Eller!" said Dick thoughtfully, and he repeated the name. "Why, I know, doctor! I was trying to say, 'Best seller.' My publisher said my book would be one. That must have been it. I must have tried to say, 'Best seller,' and they thought it was 'Bess Eller.'"

"No doubt," said the doctor dryly. "Let me ask you, do you know another young lady, one called Betty Field?"

"I'm going to marry her, if God wills," said Dick. "I was on my way to her when this thing happened to me. But what about this Bess Ellery girl?"

"In trying to discover who you were, the good people of this hospital—you are in the Westcote Hospital—found this Miss Ellery. She came and thought she had known you many years ago, at Long Branch or Asbury."

"It may be," said Dick. "My folks used to summer at Asbury. Go on, doctor. I'm interested."

"You ought to be," said the doctor. "The girl has fallen in love with you."

"What?"

"If I'm a judge," said the doctor, "she is what is called madly in love with you."

"Oh, come now!" cried Dick.

"I'm telling you merely to aid you

in avoiding any unpleasant scenes," said the doctor. "She's a vigorous, excitable young person."

"Doctor," said Dick, "do you mind telling me just what has happened since I had the accident?"

The doctor told him. Dick listened—making a comment now and then—to the story of the accident, to the anxiety of Mrs. Tutville, to the love of Miss Ellery, to his vagaries regarding Calabria and the noble and lowly persons he had peopled that imaginary kingdom with.

"Real hero stuff," he commented when the doctor had related the happenings in the picture studio. "Miss Ellery seems to be my one worst bet. Doctor, as man to man, what do you advise? I have the rudiments of a real heart even if I am an author. Should I be nice to her and break with her gradually, or is it best to pretend I know nothing about her?"

The doctor laughed grimly.

"You might wait until you see her," he said. "She may be the girl you've been waiting for all your life."

"No chance!" said Dick. "My heart is preëmpted."

Miss Durkee came, carrying Dick's garments, and with her came Mr. Acker and Miss Probst.

"Let me see!" said Dick, laughing, when the doctor had mentioned their names. "You're the man I shot with a blank cartridge, Mr. Acker? And I slapped you, Miss Probst? A thousand pardons! I dare say I'm always rough with royalty when I'm a hero person. The doctor tells me I've had the best of care here, and you have my thanks. And you're the swineherd's daughter?" he asked Miss Durkee. "Until you read my book, you won't know what a compliment that is. Now, if I may dress—"

They went out, and Dick got into his clothes. He was really worried about Miss Ellery. In spite of all Doc-

tor Blaisdell had told him, the weeks of his hallucination were still weeks of vagueness, and he did not know what had happened during the days of his disappearance. Between the time when he had fled from the hospital and the time when he had appeared at the picture studio, he might have done anything. He might have spent all those days in the company of Miss Ellery. He might be engaged to marry her!

"The best thing for me to do," he said to himself, "is to ignore her when I see her. I don't remember her; why should I pretend I do? Doctor," he said, when he was dressed, "I wish you'd get me a cab, if you can. I must go to Mrs. Tutville's at once."

"You can be extreme in your thanks to her," said Miss Probst. "She's spared no expense and she's suffered great anxiety on your account."

"I will elevate her from the lowly station of swineherd's wife to that of my guardian angel," said Dick.

There were a few preliminaries to be attended to before he could leave the hospital. His cab came, and Doctor Blaisdell shook the hand of his late patient and saw him into the cab.

"Mrs. Eleanor Tutville's house," Dick told the driver.

As his taxi rolled along the avenue toward the house where Betty Field was sitting on the wide veranda beside her aunt and uncle, another car was approaching Westcote from New York. In it sat Bess Ellery and her brother, and by the rapidly fading light Bess Ellery was reading a book that bore the title "The Lost Princess."

As she turned the pages, her face bore a look between anger and resentment. She had not read the book as carefully as the really excellent romantic story deserved to be read. She had skipped whole pages. She had been one of the very first buyers of the book, which had been placed on sale everywhere that day, and she had read

eagerly, seeking those parts that told of the doings of the duchess "fair and false." Now, as the car neared Westcote, she closed the book angrily.

"What, sis?" asked Jack.

"And the flowers I took the beast with my own hands!" she exclaimed. "Oh, I could scratch his face! The idea of thinking I was like his duchess!"

"Bad as that, is it, sis?"

"If that is what he thinks I am like!" she cried, and she threw the book far out of the car. It fell among the weeds at the side of the road. Jack Ellery laughed.

"Jack," said his sister, "I've been mistaken. I never knew this fellow. It was another person I knew at Asbury. Don't stop at the hospital. Drive home to Wayside."

"Anything you say, old sister!" said Jack cheerfully. "I got mine from Betty, and you're getting yours. Switch on our lights, will you, kid?"

As the car passed The Elms, the headlights flashed for a moment on a taxicab standing before the Tutville home, and Bess Ellery had, for an

instant, a glimpse of Dick Vickers as he stood beside the cab. Although there was small chance that he could see her face in the dusk, she turned her head away from him and the car sped by. The headlights had served another purpose, however, and Betty Field, with a cry of joy, jumped from her chair and ran down the veranda steps.

"It is my victim," said Mrs. Tutville to her husband. "Michael, if you're anything like a man, you will not let that poor, mad young fellow attack me."

"No, my dear," said Mr. Tutville meekly, and he picked up the most dangerous weapon at hand. It was a sofa pillow.

He did not have to use it. In the shadows by the gate, Betty was being held close to her author man.

"Oh, Dick, Dick!" she was weeping. "It's been so long!"

"Same here, girl!" he said.

And now we had better turn our heads away. As we can imagine what he did next, it is not necessary to behold our hero.



WINDS OF APRIL

O LITTLE Winds of April, blow softly through my dreams!
Touch them with a glint of sun and dancing April rain.
Sweep them with your redolence, and with your magic themes
Wake the olden Aprils—make them blossomy again.

O Little Winds of April, blow faintly through the trees!
Stir them with the elfin tunes that haunted them of old.
Cleanse my heart of selfishness with whispered melodies,
And blow away its bitterness on little wisps of gold.

PERRIN HOLMES. LOWREY.



Slow Torture

By Gouverneur Morris

Author of "The Penalty," "The Goddess," etc.



WHEN, after a terrific gust of three-inch shells, Frenchmen with long bayonets began to come up on the run, the company of German infantry which had been holding the village of Bois Philibert—let go.

Captain Karl Schnelter was the last to leave. In common with all the rest of the German army, he had believed, until those shattering moments, that the war was all over. That the French had not only turned at bay, but were delivering an irresistible attack, seemed inconceivable. He had the feeling that the French were not playing fair, that they were cheating. The orders which he had received said nothing about a possible retirement from the village. On the contrary, they contained minute instructions concerning the advance which he was to make at daylight on the following morning.

As you may have seen a lawn party broken up by sudden thunder and the first splashes of rain, so the Germans scattered before the sudden and deadly approach of the French. Only the darkness saved them from extermination. Once you had passed beyond the glare from the burning houses, you were safe for the moment.

Captain Karl Schnelter had given no orders. He would have given orders to hold the village till death, but his su-

perior officer—Fear-in-the-night—had been ahead of him. Captain Schnelter's company had bolted. One who had been stung by a crumb of shell clapped his hand to the seat of his trousers and howled as he ran.

From Captain Schnelter's mouth there poured a torrent of oaths and blasphemies; he was beside himself with rage and disillusionment. In his heart was a curious mixture of fear and frenzied courage. His badly shaken brain contained but one lucid idea. The papers in his bedroom must not fall into the hands of the enemy.

The house where Captain Schnelter had lodged belonged to two worthy old peasants. These, hearing the explosions of the French shells, had come up out of the cellar to see what was going on. Their faces gleamed with the hope and faith that had suddenly been rekindled.

They blocked Captain Schnelter in his rush for his room; he struck at them furiously with his saber. The woman screamed.

He darted up the stair and kicked open the door of his room. In one corner of the room, chained by the foot to a ring in the wall, sat the sullen granddaughter. If he had only known that there was going to be a retreat, he would have arranged to take her with him. It was too late to think of that

now. He flung her a glance full of hatred. It was not the expression which the sullen granddaughter dreaded, and hope was kindled in her breast.

"The French haye come!" she exclaimed, and burst out laughing.

He turned at the door, the papers clasped in his left hand. Reason no longer glimmered in his mind. A demoniac fury possessed him.

"They have come, have they? But I am here!" he shouted, and he rushed to her and fainted upon her head and uplifted arms a merciless shower of saber cuts. During the seconds which preceded her death, the sullen granddaughter called him by all the terrible epithets she had ever heard.

His egress from the house was blocked by a little boy, a simple child, with a round, moonlike face. He had an expression of mild astonishment. Captain Schnelter simply ran out of the house as if nothing blocked his way.

Already the French bayonets were in the village. It looked for a moment as if Captain Schnelter were going to engage them single-handed. He actually ran a few steps in their direction. But then he stopped short, like a man who suddenly finds himself on the brink of a precipice, leaned sharply backward, with an exclamation of horror, wheeled, and ran for his life.

Rage had yielded in his heart to fear. He had hoped to be a general some day; his sole ambition now was to reach the darkness beyond the flare of the burning village. He did not even run a zigzag course as he had been trained to do. He ran as straight a line as could be drawn with a ruler. And he made those noises which people make when they are pursued in nightmares. A few bullets hummed past him; one actually dusted his coat, but he did not know of this, and presently he was among trees, and there was no light. Still, so great was the im-

pulse of panic, he did not at once stop running. He was stopped. His right foot came down upon—air. His face smashed against an angle of masonry, and he fell.

II.

The little boy with the simple, moon-round face had been knocked down and trampled on in the headlong flight of Captain Karl Schnelter, but he was not seriously injured. He had wept rather because of the suddenness of things than because of pain. He now rose from the gutter and entered the home of his grandparents. He was a simple-minded child, and the violence to which he had been subjected had not sufficed to divert him from the purpose with which he had made his original and abruptly thwarted effort to enter the house. His kitten had been killed by a fragment of shell, and he was going to bury it in the soft garden patch near the kitchen door, where the digging was so good. He was going to bury the kitten just as grown men bury soldiers, with a wooden cross at the head of the grave.

The garden tools were kept back of the front door, and it was to secure the light spade that he had been about to enter the house. It was his grandmother herself who blocked the second attempt upon the spade.

There was blood on grandmother, but she was still strong and lively. She knelt and caught him in her sinewy arms and hugged him so tight that it hurt.

"You mustn't go upstairs, precious," she said.

"Precious" had not intended to go upstairs, but he spoke as if that had been his intention.

"Why not?" he said. "Is it because of Madeleine?"

"Yes. That's it. Mustn't go up."

"Why does the captain keep her chained to the ring in the wall?" asked

the child. "She isn't a dog." His mind wandered from his sister to more personal matters. "There has been a battle," he said. "Prosper would not stay in the cellar, and he was killed by a bursting shell. Then you and grandfather went out of the cellar. And I came, too. May I take the little spade that is behind the door? I wish to bury Prosper. He has died like a soldier. I will bury him in the soft ground near the kitchen door. I will put a cross of wood at the head of the grave."

They were interrupted by the voice of the grandfather. He was just outside in the street, and he was talking in a loud, officious way.

"This way, my colonel. Just do me the favor of entering my house, and you will see what I have to show you. This way, my colonel. This way, gentlemen."

The grandfather and a number of French officers crowded into the hall.

The grandmother was on her feet in an instant, still clinging to the moon-faced child and talking at the top of her voice. She and the grandfather both talked at once. For a moment, it sounded as if six or seven people had suddenly gone mad. Then the grandfather succeeded in silencing the grandmother with a great cry of "Silence!"

He turned to the French colonel.

"And then, my colonel, he sent the men away. And afterward he kept her chained to a ring in the wall. But go up. If you please, go up. But they left in a great hurry, I can tell you, when they saw the French bayonets. Only their captain, he came running in here, and when he saw madame and me, he fell upon her with his saber, and he ran up the stairs. I listen—I hear her calling him all the names of beasts—I hear the sound of blows. I am for rushing to the rescue, only the old woman, here, flings her arms around me. But step up, gentlemen. Step up, gentlemen."

He led the way up the narrow stairs. "Did the German captain whip Madeleine?"

The grandmother clutched the child fiercely to her breast.

"With his sword! With his sword!" she exclaimed.

"She is dead?"

The grandmother nodded, and, seeing how bitterly she wept, the moon-faced child began to weep, too.

There was a sound over their heads of heavy feet. The officers had unchained the dead Madeleine from the ring in the wall and laid her decently on the bed. Presently they came out of the room and down the stairs.

The colonel's face was terrible, it was so white and cold.

"I will send men to dig the grave," he said. "You are not much hurt, madame?"

The old woman curtseyed.

"Only a little cut here and there, my colonel."

"That is your grandson?"

"Her brother, my colonel."

The colonel's hand rested for a moment on the moon-faced one's head.

"Some day you will be a soldier," he said.

Then, as if he could no more keep his feelings in check, he swore suddenly and loudly.

"By the wounds of God," he exclaimed, "if I could get my hands on that beast, he would die by slow torture!"

When the officers had gone, and the burying squad had come and gone, and the regimental *aumônier* had stood by the open grave and personally interceded with God for the repose of the dead Madeleine's soul, and the grave had been filled up, the moon-faced child sought from his grandmother the answer to a question which had been for some time troubling him.

"What," he asked, "is slow torture?"

"It's hurting a man and hurting him,

and always hurting him, but never hurting him quite enough to kill him, and doing that until he is dead."

III.

Captain Karl Schnelter came to at the bottom of a round hole lined with smooth masonry. It had been the well of an ancient castle, and of that castle, save for certain mounds covered with huge trees, it was all that remained. It had once been very deep, but soil and débris had filtered into it for so many generations that a very tall man might have reached the ancient well curb and made shift to scramble out.

But Captain Schnelter's fingers rasped short, even when he jumped. He made half a dozen attempts, but could not bring himself to face the agony of a seventh. When he had fallen into the well, he had broken his nose against the curb, and violence of any sort made it feel as if it were seven teeth all aching at once.

He had bled all over himself; he had been sick, though he did not remember when; and he was dreadfully bruised and shaken.

He wondered what could have become of his sword and his automatic, and concluded that he must have chucked them, to lighten himself for swift running.

His fall had had upon him the effect of supreme drunkenness. He remembered some things clearly; other things he did not remember at all. He remembered murdering the sullen granddaughter, but he could not remember why he had murdered her. He had no regrets.

"I do not do things without reason," he thought, "and so, though I don't remember why I had to kill her, there was undoubtedly a sound reason."

Then he remembered about the papers. He had stuffed them into the pocket of his blouse, and there they

still were. He dug a hole in the bottom of the well and buried them.

The sun rose high in the heavens, and it became very hot and thirsty in the old well, and the pain of his broken nose kept Captain Schnelter faint and weak. He could devise no means for extricating himself from his predicament, and it was not until early afternoon that it occurred to him that he might be able, with the aid of the hoof pick in his knife, to pry loose some of the stones with which the well was lined, and to make from them a pile by which he would be able to reach the curb of the well and climb out.

The ancient cement, however, was as hard as flint and his progress was slow. Already thirst tormented him, and the lapping, lilting music of a little stream that passed a few yards from the mouth of his prison increased the torment.

A shadow fell upon him, and with a snarl of fear he looked up into the round, moonlike face of a small boy.

Captain Schnelter tried to look pleasant and engaging.

"Oh, it's you!" he said, in his best French. "I've seen you before! I always remember children. I love children much."

"Your face is all bloody," said the boy.

"I had a fall," said Captain Schnelter. "I fell into this hole, and I cannot get out. But you will help me. I feel sure that you will help me."

"I will tell the soldiers," said the boy. "They will help you out."

"Wait!" cried the captain. "Don't bother to do that. All that is needed is for you to find something for me to stand on—an old box or a lot of big stones. Just look about and see what you can find. Wait! If you get me out, I will give you this knife—four blades, scissors, a saw, a pick to clean horses' hoofs, a corkscrew. None of

your little friends will have such a knife."

The moon face disappeared for a time.

Captain Schnelter waited in an agony of suspense. Had the child gone to tell the soldiers?—And if so, what would they do to the man who had kept a French girl chained to a ring in the wall and had then cut her to pieces with his saber?

The moon face appeared once more, looking down upon the German officer.

"There is nothing," he said, "but I have here the little garden spade. I could shovel down dirt until you could climb out."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Captain Schnelter. "No ordinary child would have thought of that. And couldn't you just manage to give me a drink of water? Here, take my hat and fill it with water."

Very little water remained in the hat when the small boy finally reached it down to Captain Schnelter, and the operation had to be repeated a number of times before the captain's thirst was assuaged.

"Now, then," he exclaimed, "let's see how fast a big, strong boy like you can shovel dirt."

For half an hour the moon-faced boy worked like the sturdy little peasant that he was. And already there was quite a pile of earth in the bottom of the well.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Captain Schnelter. "You dig like a man. You haven't stopped?" There was a note of anxiety in his voice.

"I'm tired," said the boy. "I'm resting."

"Listen," said Captain Schnelter. "If you get me out of here by dark, I will not only give you the knife, but I will send you from Germany a whole box full of beautiful German toys—soldiers made of lead, and little brass cannons, and a real steam engine. No

other child will have such things. It all rests with you. Courage!"

Once more earth began to descend, one slow spadeful after another.

"It is wet," the moon-faced child explained, "because it is easier to dig near the stream."

"I don't care how wet it is," said the captain, "as long as there is plenty of it."

His hopes were rising steadily. It was wonderful how that mere child could dig.

If the mere child could raise a strong man's hopes, he could also dash them. He looked down into the well, and announced:

"I have to go now."

"But—" protested Captain Schnelter.

"I promised my grandmother. Perhaps I will come again in the morning."

"But, my dear boy, that won't do at all. I've got to get out to-night."

There was a guttural note of anxiety in the voice.

"I will give you all the money I have in my pocket—nearly five hundred francs."

The moon-faced boy shook his head.

"A promise is a promise," he said, "and I promised."

"But when your grandmother sees the money, she will forgive you for breaking your promise. Don't be a fool."

A curious, hard glint complicated the innocent and simple expression of the moon-faced boy's eyes.

"If you talk rudely to me," he said, "I will not come back at all. And, besides, when you ran out of the house, you knocked me down and hurt me. And when the French colonel saw how you had chained Madeleine to the ring in the wall and beaten her to death with your sword, he said that if he could lay his hands on you, you would die by slow torture."

All of Captain Schnelter's courage

seemed to be running away through the toes of his boots.

"I will come back in the morning," said the moon-faced child.

"For God's sake, then, dear child," pleaded the captain, "bring me a little something to eat when you come. And —you won't tell *any one* about me, will you? Promise me that!"

Again that curious glint came into the child's eyes.

"I promise that," he said.

I think the night, which passed very slowly for Captain Schnelter, may be described as so many hours of slow torture. At each moment, he expected to hear the approaching footsteps of French soldiers. And he knew that he could not hope to escape, at their hands, the penalty for his crimes. They would not make a prisoner of him. His life hung upon the word of a child, and not an ordinary child at that, but a freakish, impish child, who seemed to be half-witted and precociously wise by turns.

The sun rose again on battle-scarred France, and once more Captain Schnelter began to pluck up heart. Nothing had happened. The strange child had kept his promise. He hadn't told the soldiers. Captain Schnelter was now more tormented by thirst and hunger than by bodily fear.

The moon-faced child appeared suddenly, looking down into the well.

"You blessed child!" cried Captain Schnelter. "You don't know how glad I am to see you!"

"Listen," said the moon-faced child. "I spoke to our colonel about you——"

Captain Schnelter made a sound that was between a squeal and an oath.

"I didn't tell him where you were. I only asked him if it was true about what he would do to you if he caught you, and he said it wasn't true. He said French soldiers are not allowed to put their enemies to death by slow torture, even if their enemies are very wicked, like you. He said he hoped he

wouldn't catch you, because all he could do would be to take you prisoner. He said he hoped some of the peasants would catch you."

Captain Schnelter ground his teeth with impatience.

"It would be all right for grandfather or me to torture you," said the moon-faced boy cheerfully. "But you asked me for some food. It was not easy to find anything. You Germans have eaten up everything, our colonel says."

"And water, too!" exclaimed Schnelter. "I am terribly thirsty."

"You will have plenty of water presently," said the moon-faced child, "but throw me up your hat, and I will give you a drink now."

When Captain Schnelter had had his drink, the moon-faced child laughed.

"What are you laughing at?"

"Every one says that Germans hate water, but it isn't true, is it? When you lived in grandfather's house, you drank only wine, but now you are glad of water. Is it true that the Germans do not wash?"

"It is not true."

"All over? Do they wash themselves all over?"

"Of course."

"Do you know how to swim?"

"To swim? No. But why do you ask me such foolish questions?"

"Because I am not a soldier."

Upon which enigmatic remark, the moon-faced child vanished. He reappeared presently and emptied into the well a spadeful of damp earth.

"You said you had something for me to eat," said Captain Schnelter.

"That's true."

A moment later, he tossed down a paper parcel tied with string. Captain Schnelter untied the string and unwrapped the paper. Then he gave a harsh cry of disgust.

The moon-faced child laughed.

"That is Prosper, my kitten, who was

killed by a bursting shell, and whom I buried with a wooden cross at the head of the grave, and whom I have dug up for your breakfast."

There was a something sinister and terrible in the expression of the moon-faced child.

"A French soldier," he explained, "could only have taken you prisoner. But it is different with us peasants. We do as we please. You will be sorry before I have finished with you—very sorry to think that you chained my sister to the ring in the wall and beat her to death with your sword."

Captain Schnelter began a frenzied series of attempts to get out of the well. Once he actually got his fingers on the curb, but the moon-faced child, putting all his strength into the blow, smashed down upon them with the flat of the little spade, and Captain Schnelter dropped back into the bottom of the well with a scream of rage.

A spadeful of damp earth took him full in the mouth.

"Silence!" said the moon-faced child. And he gave a very fair imitation of his grandfather when silencing his grandmother.

Captain Schnelter attempted to wheedle, to plead, to promise, but he was speaking to deaf ears. It was only when he cried suddenly: "For God's sake, what are you going to do to me?" that the moon-faced child answered.

"I am cutting a little drain from the brook to the mouth of the well," he said. "The digging is not easy, and I am only a child, but when I have finished the little drain, I can rest and watch the water trickle into the well. And you'll see what you get for chain-

ing my sister to the ring in the wall, pig!"

Ten minutes later, a film, then a trickle, and then a strong jet of water flowed over the curbstone into the well. The moon-faced child continued to widen and deepen the channel which he had dug. He was deaf to all entreaties and promises. The water rose higher and higher in the well, and the German's pale eyes looked as if they were going to pop from their sockets.

When the water was up to his armpits, he began to scream for help. The water rose to his chin, an inch higher; and when it had reached that point, it ceased suddenly to flow into the well.

"I have made a little dam," said the moon-faced child. "It wouldn't do to drown you all at once. What our colonel said you needed was slow torture. While you are able to stand, you will not drown, but after a long while, maybe a whole night, you will not be able to stand any longer."

The moon-faced child withdrew, to reappear a moment later.

"Do you think chaining my sister to the ring in the wall and beating her to death with your sword was worth while?"

He vanished. He reappeared.

"Silly pig!" he said, and vanished for the last time.

Toward midnight, Captain Karl Schnelter, weakened by cold, hunger, and fear, was no longer able to keep his face above water.

If people wonder why none of his bursts of screaming were heard in the near-by village of Bois Philibert, they had better ask the French colonel.





The Despoiler

By Mary Heaton Vorse

Author of "The Very Little Person,"
"The Ninth Man," etc.

THIS is a story of things as they are, and because it is that, one should not blame Lila too much. She had been brought up like most girls, and most girls are brought up to think that anything that is done in the name of love is beautiful. She had been brought up to smile tolerantly at what we call "calf love." So, for what she did, her philosophy let her off lightly. Her excuse, when she thought anything about it, went something like this:

"A boy of his age would be in love with some one anyway, and better a nice woman like me." Since she observed all the standards of her world, she was profoundly certain that she was a nice woman.

She herself was caught in the chain of things as they are, and in the end she was the greatest sufferer of the three of them, since, for her, there was no escape from the bondage in which life and circumstance had enmeshed her; since life for her did not exist except through another human being's love.

That was why she wanted every thought of Karl's mind, and every beat of his heart. She thought her reason for this was love, but it may have been her struggle for existence, since when he was unaware of her for a moment,

life had no longer any meaning. He, on his part, struggled perpetually against this absorption in his savage battle for self-preservation. They had been married three years, and they were bound together by a bitter love.

It was Karl himself who put a new weapon in her hand.

When she heard the train's whistle, she would go out where she could watch for Karl in the lane that led to their house, but since the night when he had seemed impatient at her running to meet him, she waited until she saw a flicker of his hat through the trees, and then she went back to wait his coming on the piazza of the house.

Sometimes she talked with Lewis Grey, the boy next door. He was a sweet boy, taller than she. The things he said to Lila pleased her. They were things like: "I thought you were a little girl when you first came to live here. I never thought you were married."

At this she flushed shell pink, and said something about having been married very young, and looked up at him appealingly.

Then she saw that Karl had turned the corner, and she pretended not to see him and ran up to the piazza to wait as usual. She saw Lewis' grandmother standing at the door, watching her. She was old and meager; her eternal

dress of grayish calico hung limply around her. The mosaic pin that fastened her collar was so large Lila could see it from where she was.

Karl, too, saw the old woman, who still stood there, turning a questioning face toward Lila, who was sitting so consciously on the veranda—sitting there as if she had never moved, Karl thought angrily. Certain memories of his own boyhood assailed him, and jealousy, like an arrow of pain, pierced him through.

He threw himself down on the step, avoiding her eyes.

"I suppose supper's not ready," he barked, trying to put her on the defensive.

Supper was always ready. Lila took care to give Karl no reason for complaint. She was a good wife.

"Of course it's ready. Why shouldn't it be?" she answered with good temper.

"I thought you looked as if you'd been out."

"Out? Where could I go *here*?"

"You might have been to the beach."

"I don't like going to the beach alone," she said plaintively.

"You don't have to go alone, do you? You can take the kid with you." He nodded in Lewis' direction.

Now Lila knew why he was angry. She savored his unacknowledged jealousy, glad to have him suffer in kind, for she was jealous, too—even in this isolated place, where she had thought there would be nothing to come between them. In all the other places they had lived, there had been people and events that had protected Karl and kept Lila from possessing him wholly.

Her rival was Karl's boat. In it he could escape from her, and he loved it, so she hated the boat and the bay and the isolation that yet gave him a means of escape from her. She hated it as she might have hated a living person.

"I don't see what makes you so grouchy," she said innocently.

"I'm not grouchy—I'm hungry."

He hated himself that he could be so enmeshed in the web of his emotions. He wanted to escape, if only for a moment, from the thought of her.

Far off a white sail beckoned him, and with it came a sense of peace. He ate quickly. He was beyond her reach again. She knew that her moment of triumph was over, and sat watching him covertly.

"It's a lovely evening," he said. "Don't you want to take a sail?" He tried to keep a note of uneasiness from his voice.

"No, I hate sailing."

"If you don't mind, I think I'll go." He looked at her anxiously, fearing the delay of a scene, and yet knowing that he would fight for peace and solitude as he would for air.

She knew he was beyond any appeal she could make. She turned away; a sense of defeat brought tears welling to her eyes. She watched the boat slanting in the evening breeze, and felt that it had betrayed her and defrauded her of something that was her right.

As she watched it, her face grew hard. She sauntered to the fence between her yard and the Greys. Two gnarled and unfruitful apple trees sheltered the neighboring house. Sparse, old-fashioned flowers grew around it—pinks and bleeding hearts which Lew's grandmother had planted years ago, for the Greys had always lived there. Leaning over the fence, Lila called deliberately:

"Lew, I want to speak to you!" And when he burst out of the house, she smiled to herself.

Lew's grandmother followed him to the door and stood looking after him. Lila could feel the old woman's dubious, pleading gaze on her, and she turned her eyes away impatiently.

He was a handsome boy, well filled

out for his age and almost as tall as Karl. He stood waiting quietly to see why she had called him.

"Don't you want to come and talk to me?" she said gently. "Karl's gone."

Her tone broke in self-pity. Karl had been jealous—yet he had left her. She glanced at the boat, now small in the distance. Her voice had a plangent note that went to Lew's heart.

She led the way to the house, and they sat on the steps of the porch.

"This must be a pretty dull place for you," he said.

"I don't mind daytimes. It's evenings."

The colors of the bay were as soft and iridescent as the breast of a dove. They watched it change to a sheet of luminous gray that reflected stars in its depths. Without any direct words, Lila made Lew feel that she was unhappy and neglected and that the boat was her enemy, and pity gushed forth from his heart as from a living spring. In that moment Lew joined the fellowship of men who wish to defend the women they love from unhappiness. He had admired her before, and now he pitied her and wished to save her from hurt. He managed to falter out some halting words that she must call on him for anything at any time.

"Thank you," she said gravely. "I shan't be so lonely any more."

A thrill of pride ran through Lew. He felt as if he had been given some precious trust. He gazed at Lila with an adoration possible only for a boy as yet untouched by life.

His humble admiration pleased her.

"You're a sweet boy," she said, and bent impulsively down and put her cheek against his, as if he had been a child.

At her touch, Lew felt dizzy and light-headed. The blood pounded in his ears. Lila flushed slowly, and her eyes

sought Lew's in a deep and questioning gaze.

He said good night with the abrupt, appealing awkwardness of youth, and sped away through the dusk. He was overwhelmed by the violence of this new emotion that had gushed into his heart.

When he went home, he felt that the family had been talking about him, with what a difficult trickle of words he could imagine. His father's ears glowed like red lanterns; the top of his head was pink, and small, shining drops of perspiration beaded it. He held his newspaper clutched with embarrassed desperation, for Lew had come in just after his grandmother had shrilled:

"What does she want of Lew? Tell me that!"

Mr. Grey, very much shocked, had protested:

"Mother—now, mother!"

His mother and his grandmother sat self-consciously busy, their words arrested on their lips. They were meager, unassertive women. His mother had a long, intelligent nose like a ferret's, and to-night her expression made Lew feel that she knew everything about him. His grandmother's gnarled hands, under the circle of light that fell from the lamp, made a lavender spot against the gray of her dress. Compared to Lila's, they hardly seemed like hands to Lew. He hurried from the room, away from the averted eyes of his self-conscious family.

Lila sat on her porch, staring into the night. When Karl came back, rested and refreshed, he braced himself for her usual reproaches. None came. When he spoke, she answered absently, absorbed in her thoughts. She was remote and withdrawn. He strove to break through her silence, wishing to be on terms with her, softened toward her, too, by the consciousness of his own neglect.

"Lila!" he implored at last.

"H'm?"

"Oh, Lila——"

"Well, what do you want?"

"You," he said humbly. "I don't want you to be mad any more."

"I'm not mad."

"No, you're worse than mad! You——you——"

He had not meant to show his pain. His own vehemence surprised him. He stood over her, dark and menacing.

A delicious thrill of terror shot through Lila. She was touched by his anger and by his humility, and she longed to throw herself into his arms—and then she remembered that in her hand was a new weapon. The road to his heart was not by surrender and love and faith, but by the bitter road of jealousy and denial. She felt happy and victorious. She was stronger than he.

"Where are you going?" Karl asked, as she got up.

"To bed. I'm tired."

He felt like a man who comes into a familiar room in the dark to stumble over unfamiliar things.

The next day, after supper, Lew came to see them. He shifted his feet uneasily after he had said, "Good evening," striving for words, for Karl's presence made him shy and awkward.

Karl sat quiet, his shoulders hunched, his angry eyes fixed steadily on Lew. He enjoyed making the boy fidget under his hostile stare. After what seemed an interminable silence, "Won't you sit down?" Karl invited, a note of mockery in his voice.

"No, thank you," Lew faltered. "I just came to speak about the boat."

"Oh, yes, the boat?" questioned Karl, irony and insult in his tone.

"You don't want to sell it, do you?"

"Sell my boat? What made you think I'd want to sell my boat?" he bullied.

Lew pulled himself together; a flash of anger gleamed in his eyes.

"Well, you see," he explained, "you don't use it much— evenings sometimes, and Sundays."

"When would you think I'd use it?" Karl asked, with insulting arrogance. "I work."

Lew reddened at his emphasis.

"I do, too," he said shortly. "I know a man who's looking for a boat."

"Oh," Karl interrupted, "I thought you might be looking for a pleasure boat for yourself."

They stood confronting each other. Their hostility was like the growling of animals preparing to fight.

"If you change your mind, let me know," Lew said with serious politeness.

"I will!" Karl threw after Lew's retreating figure.

Lila waited for Karl to say something, but he didn't speak. She had an instinct to end this conflict, to beg him not to hurt her so by his neglect, to sell the boat. But she checked this as weakness. She had found the only weapon that had any power over him. This weapon was Lew's devotion.

Meantime jealousy covered all the surface of Karl's life like black ooze, and from it blossomed dark flowers of passion, strange desires and cruelties. Karl found out how it is that men commit murder to escape from unbearable circumstances, and Lila tended his jealousy as if it had been a plant.

She never gave a thought how it would affect Lew. Indeed, when she was with him, paradoxically she felt pure and good. She grew to love his love; she drank his devotion like wine, and gave no thought to the cup from which she drank. Lew gave her the affection that Karl had denied her, so he became necessary to her. When he asked her to go to the beach with him one day when he had an afternoon off, she consented willingly.

Lew's grandmother saw him come out of his room, his face alight, his hair

shining, dressed in his white flannels and his new brown shoes. She put her hand on his arm.

"Don't go, Lew!" she pleaded awkwardly. "Don't go! She's fooling you."

He sped away as if he hadn't heard, while the two women who loved him watched them out of sight, Lila swinging along, a spot of shining white, white shoes on her feet, a white hat on her head, a peach-colored sweater on her arm.

That afternoon marked the high tide of Lew's youth. They swam and sat on the sand afterward, far down the beach, and made sand castles. Lila forgot her bitter conflict with Karl; she forgot everything but the soft oblivion of the moment. The lazy, iridescent hours floated by like bubbles. Then reality came to them like the striking of Cinderella's clock.

It came with Lila's sitting up in the sand and staring down the empty bathing beach.

"*What time is it?*" she asked.

They stared at each other with startled eyes.

"We've lost our train!" she said next. "Karl'll be home when I get there!"

Still Lew said nothing, but stared at Lila. At last he cried:

"Oh, it's my fault, Lila! I should have kept track of the time!"

"He can get his supper himself for once," she said.

There was a note of bravado in her voice. She knew how inadequate her confession, "We've been to the beach!" would be, dropped into Karl's ironic silence. She had put herself in the wrong. She flushed with vexation; she had been so careful to give him no cause for complaint.

They went into the house together, ready to meet the shock of Karl's anger. The door was open. The house was still with the quiet of emptiness.

Flies buzzed around the unappetizing remains of a hastily eaten supper.

Lila ran to the window. The tide was in and the boat was gone.

Tears of rage came to her eyes. He hadn't cared enough to be angry! She hadn't dreamed that he would so escape from her. She had seen his jealousy grow big until he was hemmed in by it, and now a boat and a pleasant evening had made him forget her. It was for this that she had been so careful, for this last shameful neglect that she had been so good!

"Stay for supper," she asked Lew. He hesitated. "Oh, stay!" she urged him recklessly. "Karl won't mind. You see he didn't mind my being late."

Into their mood came the heady sense of danger. The innocence of the afternoon was over. Then they had been friends; now they had become accomplices. Lew felt the blood drumming in his ears. Lila was only a shadow in the dusk, but she was nearer Lew than she had ever been. The dark and its intimacy blotted out from him the knowledge that she was older—and married—and that he was only a boy. Lila sat motionless, and though he couldn't see her eyes, he knew that she was looking at him sitting there—waiting. Then, as if following some law, like that of gravitation, he got up quietly, without haste, and went to her. He dropped on the floor beside her and buried his head in her lap.

"Baby!" she whispered. "Baby! You don't mind my calling you that, do you?"

"No," he said, holding her fast.

She held him a moment cradled in her arms. Suddenly she lifted his bowed head in the cup of her hand and kissed him. Then she pushed him from her and sprang to her feet.

"*What was that?*" she whispered. There was a sound of cautious footfalls. The night was still. The foot-

falls had stopped. There was a sense in the air as of some one listening.

"Light the light! He mustn't find us here in the dark!" Lew whispered.

"It's too late! Go! Go quickly! Go by the door in front!"

Already the footsteps were on the porch. Lila sped like a ghost upstairs, while Lew fumbled at the seldom used front door. He tried to turn the key, but it had rusted in the lock.

There was the sound of some one stumbling over a chair and the scratching of a match. Lew slid like a shadow into the parlor next the front door, and flattened himself against the wall, a shivering figure of guilt. He thought only of Lila and what it would mean to her if he were found skulking there.

After the scratching of the match came silence. Lew knew that Karl was staring at the telltale supper dishes. Then the silence was rent through by Karl's voice.

"Lila!" he cried. "Lila, where are you? Answer me! Lila!" he called out into the darkness, his fury mounting. "Lila, if you don't answer me—by God!"

Lew stood motionless, not daring to draw breath. A little breeze waved the curtain back and forth like a flag of hope. The parlor window was open. He heard Karl go out, and he crawled to the window. Karl was padding around the house, tearing the silence with his cry of "Lila!" a mounting emphasis of anger in each call. Then Lew heard him call:

"Oh, you're upstairs, are you?"

He had seen the light in her window, and he stormed into the house, while Lew let himself down from the window. He crouched beneath it, listening to Karl beating on Lila's door. His repressed jealousy had overflowed and was carrying him along on its violent tide. There was danger in his voice, a hint of madness in his anger, and this madness communicated itself to Lew.

It seemed to him that this was no longer Karl, but Murder, that was crying out and pounding on the door.

Then there was silence—and to Lew this silence was more awful than Karl's noisy anger. The silence endured, full of menace, a silence that brooded tragedy. He could imagine Lila cowering in her room like something entrapped, and Karl waiting outside that closed door.

What Lew did then plumbed the measure of his love and of his youth. It was born of a desire to defend the woman he loved; it had in it the things of which he had read; it was absurd, and it was romantic, but it had a dangerous sincerity behind it.

Lew ran home and got his shotgun from the woodshed and ran back to crouch under Lila's window.

The awful silence endured. The very air seemed to wait, listening. Then suddenly it was broken by Karl's voice.

"Let me in!" he cried. "I say, let me in! I know why you won't open! I know why you're afraid! Open the door, or, by God, I'll break it!" Murder was in his tone.

Then Lila's voice slid into the noise of his fury, shockingly composed.

"If you can keep quiet a moment, I'll open. You act like a fool. The neighbors will think you're drunk."

She was quite fearless, master of her herself and of Karl. She had loved his anger; it had showed her that desperation, not indifference, had driven him from the house.

There was silence. Lew heard the turning of the key. Then came Karl's voice, racked beyond endurance with suspicion and jealousy.

"What made you—Do you care for him? You can't! There's more ways than one of caring! Answer me!"

"Stop, Karl! You hurt!"

"Answer! Tell the truth!"

"Karl, stop!"

"Why didn't you answer? What made you lock your door?"

He pushed her back to the window, his hands clutching her shoulders, and stood towering over her.

Lew's body had a numb sense as if it had been frozen into an obedient machine. He raised the gun slowly. He could see Lila quiver under Karl's hands. There was silence. Then Karl cried out:

"The truth, Lila! Tell me the truth!"

For a moment she let him suffer suspense. Then her voice floated out on the silky night air.

"There's nothing to tell. There isn't any truth. I just let him hang around. He's nothing but a kid! I just let him stay because my heart was breaking—for you—Karl!"

"Lila!"

"You'll do anything to kill time when you're lonely."

"Lila darling! Lila, you're sure that's all?"

She didn't resent this. How sure she was she made him feel. For Karl's amusement she described the boy—his grown-up airs, his sudden departures when emotion choked him. She spared no little sweetness of his; there was no intimate confidence she didn't tell.

With a great sigh, Karl put his arms around her.

"Oh, Lila, why did you—"

She pushed him from her; her loosened hair hung about her face, her creamy skin was flushed, her eyes were shining with tears of excitement.

"I was so lonely," she said, lifting her face to his.

"You shan't be lonely again—ever," he said.

She laughed. There was a hint of tears in her voice. He had surrendered himself to her. She had won. Out of disaster and tragedy, she had snatched victory. She was reckless with success.

"You'll sell the boat now, won't you,

Karl? I'll give up the kid, and you'll give up the boat."

Her words were like a match lighted in a well. He peered at her incredulously.

"I see!" he said slowly. *"I see!"* He had the sensation of having dropped from a great height.

"What do you see?" asked Lila hotly.

He didn't answer, but walked to the window and leaned out.

Tragedy had walked abroad through his life. He had been at the point of anger when murder follows, and murder had stalked him from the dark. Then his anger had collapsed, and relief and love of Lila had filled his heart. Then, as in a glare of lightning, he had seen the whole meager plot in which he had been so passionate an actor. His anger seemed to have happened a long time ago. He could never be angry again that way. He looked out into the night at the distant stars. He knew that his enslavement was finished. He could live with Lila and even love her; but she could never make him suffer again.

Lila sat on the bed, waiting. She didn't know what had happened. She only knew that, at the moment of fulfillment, the cup had been taken from her. He had escaped her at the moment when her hand had closed over his heart. He turned to her abruptly.

"Sure I'll sell the boat to the kid tomorrow, and you let the kid alone."

On the grass below, Lew was weeping his boyhood away, his gun by his side. He wept away his faith in women—his kindness and his chivalry. *Why—why—* He couldn't understand *why*. He found himself repeating: *"If only she hadn't kissed me! If only she hadn't!"* He couldn't bear the memory of the kiss. He lay there, de-spoiled and shamed.

Everything was very still. There was a noise of frogs in the distance,

and the wandering breeze brought to Karl the smell of the salt marsh and the faint smell of honeysuckle that grew on the old fence. Then Karl spoke into the silence of the night.

"Poor kid!" he said.

At this Lew raised himself up. He saw Karl silhouetted against the window, and his heart went out to him in sympathy. He was no longer his enemy. He had a curious sense of communion with this man, so lately his enemy and now his friend. They had

both suffered at the hands of their common foe; both of them had been betrayed, he himself despoiled, and for no reason. He looked up at Karl.

"Poor kid!" He had been a poor kid—a poor fool of a kid—but he wasn't any more. He was a man, and he was free; all of life was in front of him; and he knew now who his enemy was. He got up and walked toward his house, his forgotten shotgun in his hand, leaving behind him his boyhood.



THE QUESTION

THEY say there's no such thing as luck,
And maybe they're right, but none the less,
If I'm splashed with mud from a motor truck,
I'm always wearing my evening dress.
If I ever hazard a sporting guess,
My bet goes wrong and I have to pay.
And so I query, in mild distress,
If that isn't luck, what is it, pray?

In poker, I fill a flush—and buck
A pat full house in my joyfulness;
If I match for drinks, I am always stuck;
My hands at bridge are a fearful mess;
When my Sunday suit I sponge and press,
The rains come down on it right away.
So I am puzzled, I must confess.
If that isn't luck, what is it, pray?

I know I'm sort of a stupid duck,
A mutt, no doubt, and a boob, oh, yes,
Yet I work with vim and I fight with pluck
And my life has been a fair success.
But whomever the hands of Chance caress,
It's never I; what they send *my* way
Is the wallop Johnson got from Jess.
If that isn't luck, what is it, pray?

ENVOY.

Still, Fate's a good old wizardess,
And I haven't a kick I'd make to-day;
For a girl has promised my life to bless.
If that isn't luck, what is it, pray?

BERTON BRALEY.



SHOES

By Charles Saxby

Author of "The Mancac," "The Temple Girl," etc.

PEOPLE never know what they're really walking on, and if they did, they'd walk just the same."

It was Collins who spoke, his words biting through the heavy African dusk with that touch of ruthlessness which seemed characteristic of the man. In that afterward when we knew so much more about it all, we liked to think that those words had struck us peculiarly, but in actual fact they passed largely unnoticed; we were used to Collins' mordant philosophies. Cort, certainly, hardly heard them; since the first impressions of youth are so much more of the eye than of the ear, it was with the scene he was busy just then.

Not that there was much to see—just the dim length of the gallery, kept dark to preserve an impression of coolness; the shimmer of the lagoon, almost invisible under the overcast sky; strange shapes of trees in monstrous silhouette; the light from the oil lamp at the corner of the Praça sending a streak of yellow actually across the vagueness of the night. Bare feet slippers along the foreshore; throaty voices rose in that perpetual nigger yapping; the wet, dead heat of Africa wrapped us about with a sticky inertia, like flies caught in warm mucilage.

It was just Grand Pram, in fact, drearily familiar to all of us, and against it the figure of young Cort, with his crisp New England speech, his clear eyes and immaculate flannels that

stamped him as a newcomer. One could actually smell the north upon his skin, the blessed scent of a land that has seasons and sidewalks and east winds.

Next him, sprawled in a deck chair and steadily absorbing trade gin, was Collins, and it amused us to see the perplexity with which he filled Cort. The rest of us the boy could understand somewhat from the background of our trading posts; to him the mere word "business" explained anything. But for Collins he could evidently find no explanation at all.

A great gray hulk of a man—his face, all deep seams and a walrus mustache, faintly illuminated by the glow of his pipe—we were accustomed to him, and his arrival that afternoon, clad in flannel pajamas, lolling in a battered hammock between the shoulders of Kru-boy bearers, his only visible baggage a bunch of bananas and a gin bottle, had been merely an accustomed incident. He was always arriving from nowhere in particular and departing again for the same destination. But to Cort he was plainly a puzzle—a white man, indeterminately American, suddenly emerging from behind that painted screen of African strangeness which hung all about.

As if sensing Cort's unspoken question, Collins answered it, with a twinkling amusement:

"Oh, I'm just a West Coaster, my

boy. You don't know what that means, and probably you never will. The question is, what are you doing in this benighted land, you blessed Boston innocent?"

"I'm in the shoe-manufacturing business," Cort answered, even as he had previously answered us; and even as we had, so Collins replied, as from the foreshore came that unending slap of bare feet.

"Shoes!" Collins' gray-flanneled stomach shook with laughter. "Shoes—in Grand Pram! Why, even we whites—"

He finished by stretching out a foot from which dangled a straw slipper.

"I suppose life is simpler here," suggested Cort brightly.

"Is it? I'm glad you find it so," Collins grunted. "Simple or not, you'll find it a poor shoe market."

But a market, as he had explained to us, was the last thing Cort was seeking. We knew whence he came—the Cort Shoe Company. Even in London, we had seen their advertisements, electrically announcing that "Cort Shoes Walk the Earth."

With the lanes of the sea all disarranged by the war, it had taken Cort nearly three months to travel from New York to Grand Pram. Except for that same disarrangement which had so prolonged it, the journey would never have been taken. Silently, unsuspected as yet by the great mass of the American people, that disarrangement was stealing into the most ordinary things of life—matters of the breakfast table and the bathroom, affairs of eggs and soap and shoes.

"Did you ever hear the question: How many hides has a cow?" he asked us. "Back in the factory, we've split and hair-split that question, the same as we have the hides, and the only answer we can find is—rubber."

Rubber! We began to see at that, regretfully telling him that he must go

farther east if he were seeking rubber—to Benin or Kamerun.

But rubber, it seemed, was only half the answer to the question; the other half had fractions, mostly cork dust and the rest pouie gum. At that we began to understand more, though pouie gum seemed a queer incentive for such an adventurous war-time journey; but to Cort whatever had to do with the good of the factory was sufficient incentive for anything.

It was not just the money, he solemnly assured us. There were ethics and ideals in the manufacturing of shoes, we found, and adventure and excitement in the scientific search for the perfect sole.

He had quite a vision of it, and he gave us a glimpse, pouring it out with the enthusiasm of his twenty-four years. It was not even only the factory—he showed us photographs of that, a vast place, apparently put up by the acre, its white walls rising amidst shaven lawns and a sort of garden suburb for the housing of its thousands of workers; there were bigger things than that back of his quest. One was to set leather free for the feet of the army, those suddenly precious feet of the young men who were to carry to victory the march of liberty. And that other, daily march of the whole people, a march less spectacular, but just as necessary, an industrial march up and down at their daily tasks of mill and mine and field, office and railroad, that the army might be fed and clothed—that march, too, it was the task of the Cort Company to help shoe as effectively as it could; and the sudden need of pouie gum was just another example of the general disarrangement of the world.

"Things are so queer! Six months ago, nobody had ever heard of pouie gum, except a few chemists," he cried. "But now it's the most important thing, back at the factory, and a mighty im-

portant thing to the millions of Americans who are going to wear our shoes in the next few years—though they don't know that yet, nor probably ever will."

It was then that came those afterward remembered words, spoken in Collins' tone of perpetual detachment:

"People never know what they're really walking on, and if they did, they'd walk just the same. And they don't know what they really knock about on the tops of pool tables, nor what they really wash with—but if they did, they'd play pool and wash just the same. But I know." Collins nodded portentously. "I know what's back of the ivory and the palm oil and the feathers they stick in their hats and the rubber they make their tires of. I've seen where they come from, and I've seen how they come. Lord, the things I've seen!"

There was a quality in his tone which affected even us; down there on the coast we were apt to take oil and rubber and such things as established facts, indifferent as to their sources. But as Collins spoke, we had a disturbing sense as if the curtains of the night might part and disclose uncomfortable truths.

"And have you seen where pouie gum comes from, too?" asked Cort, true to his single idea.

We had all seen that, for the hinterland of Grand Pram is one of its main sources. The trade in it had never been very important, and now, since it could neither be manufactured into poison gas nor shot off as explosives, the war had swept it from the commercial board. But it was there still, up where the hills first break from the swamps of the coast—a rotten sort of country, all greasy clay under foot and never a glimpse of the sky for the trees. And here and there, looming through the green gloom like ghosts of bygone torches, you see the gums, all covered with pale, flame-colored blos-

soms. There had never been more than ten thousand loads, of a hundred pounds each, and it all had come down to Grand Pram. In fact it was a sort of tribal monopoly, old, old "palaver" that reached back to the days before the coming of white men.

"If I can just get a contract for three hundred tons a year!" Cort reiterated. "We use such a tiny percentage, but it makes all the difference. Surely there should be no difficulty in getting it, since we can afford to pay so well."

His ideas of the coast were of the vaguest; he seemed to imagine Africa as a sort of wide-open place into which he could walk and shake a contract, with immediate results. But Africa is very much itself—very busy with its own affairs, and never, never to be hurried. All he seemed able to do was to sit and look on, as at a reflection in a slimed mirror, which he could merely stare at without being able to penetrate.

We could do little to help just then, marking time as we were until the general barrage of the war should be over, treading softly to keep things quiet, enduring, as best we could, the deadly sameness of Grand Pram.

Grand Pram, day in, day out; an amphibious sort of land, patterned by stagnant pools and a sinister riot of vegetation; the line of trading posts along the foreshore sizzling under their tin roofs; back of them the huddle of alleys, all stench and swarming with nigger life as with black maggots; a few old houses looming above the huts with the huge-ness of ancient galleons stranded amidst a mass of wreckage. It was one of those which was present in our thoughts as Collins spoke again:

"Has he seen Claude Brue yet?"

There was a general sound of exasperation, and Collins twinkled again as he heard it.

"I know. But it's his only chance for pouie gum."

"Claude Brue?" Cort repeated after

him. "I didn't know there was another white man here."

"There isn't," Collins replied dryly. "But it might take you a little while to find that out."

"Oh, a half white?" Cort suggested.

But Collins, who came from one of the Southern States, reared amongst its iron-clad traditions concerning negroes, gave a snort of disgust.

"There's no such thing as a half white. There are whites and blacks, and one drop of black blood makes a nigger. But you'll have to go to him, Heaven help you!"

"Why, is he so alarming?" Cort laughed; and at the sound of it, so boyish and so uncomprehending, Collins seemed to throw up his hands.

"No—you won't know enough to be alarmed," he said.

We had known it must come to Claude Brue in the end, though we had been putting off the day. Pouie gum was a tribal affair, and the great, battered Chief's House, with its lines of sagging shutters, its walls blotched with damp as by some disfiguring disease, held all the threads of such matters. "Tribal influence" was all we told Cort, knowing that, though we talked all night, he would understand no more. There are some things that have to be absorbed through the skin from the atmosphere, and this was one of them.

That the Brues were chiefs paramount would mean nothing to him; it really meant but little of anything at all these latter days. But that Claude—it was "Cudjoe," really—was hereditary head of the Lion Company meant much. Cort, however, had no idea what the Lion Company was, and the distance between the doctrine of transmigration and the shoeing of the feet of America was too great for him to bridge until after several years of the coast. But the Lion Company was the underground power in native affairs, and we knew that, if pouie gum were

ever to reach those American feet, it would do so along those invisible, half-masonic threads that reached from every bush village to the old house out by the lesser lagoon.

A queer mixture—the blackness of nigger superstition and that triumph of modern science, the Cort Shoe Factory; the vagueness of the bush, reddened by blood, with animal souls hovering in the night, wailing for entrance into human bodies, and that blazing sign at the bottom of Ludgate Hill, announcing that "Cort Shoes Walk the Earth."

We saw it all so clearly, all those things which Cort, only three days on the coast, could not even hope to understand. It was Collins who spoke what was in our minds at that instant:

"About the only way for a fellow to learn a new country quickly is through a woman." He nodded to us.

"A woman!" Cort echoed. "But there aren't any here. Oh, of course, I know that there are thousands," he corrected himself, "but they're all black."

Then, with the crackling brilliance of a bright idea, came his suggestion:

"By George, I forgot them for the moment! I wouldn't even mention it if it weren't such an important thing for me to get the gum, and they've been here so long and know the place so well. I was just wondering if the Santieras couldn't help me a bit?"

The Santieras! Another of those things he could not fathom; another thing he would have to take in through the pores, to replace the ideas sweated out by that African change of the mind, every bit as chemical as the change it makes in one's flesh. Since those ideas were still in him, we had said nothing, knowing that he would merely see things through the persistent image of New England lingering on his retina.

How long the Santieras had been in Grand Pram no one quite knew, but it was a hundred years at least, back to the days when the town had been a

Spanish possession. There were only two of them left now—Lucy Santierra and her mother, la señora, a gray-haired wisp of a woman who sat all day in her shadowed patio, under the green fronds of the bananas and the branches of red-and-yellow fruit, amongst a circle of black wenches, all rolling cigarettes of the Santierra tobacco, grown in the fields across the lagoon. Whenever a steamer came, they were sent north to France, carrying the Santierra name even into the trenches.

"We must do what we can," the señora would sigh. "But it is so little!"

It always gave us a comforting sense of the enormousness of the resources back of that struggle, just that mound of cigarettes growing daily in that far-off, unknown African courtyard.

And Lucy sat silently by, her long, fine fingers slightly stained by the tobacco amongst which they worked, her masses of hair red gold above her blackly brilliant eyes, the green of the leaves casting olive shadows on throat and cheek.

Most of us had known her father, for whom the señora wore her perpetual black, for it was a tradition of the house, as they could have told you as far off as Colombo or Fiji, or wherever men wandered who had once touched the coast, that there can be but one man in the life of a woman of the Santierras. It was just that which had made them so widely known. He had died in that house, refusing promotion to other colonies to which the señora might not follow him, and in her eyes was the soft gleam of a woman who has been greatly loved.

For nineteen years, Lucy had grown up in that courtyard, knowing little beyond it, dreaming over books and mandolin—dreaming of the day when some white prince should open its doors for her. But, as the señora said: "In these days—" Then she would finish with

a little sigh that implied the same disarrangement of the war creeping even into that slumbrous patio. The white men were all gone, except us oldsters, left to sit on the lid of Africa and keep things quiet.

"The Santierras—and Claude Brue!" we exclaimed, at Cort's halting suggestion. "Why, man, they don't even know he's on earth!"

And Cort, flushing again at his mistake, eagerly agreed:

"Of course. I forgot that you said he was a nigger."

II.

Nigger or not, Cort had to see Claude Brue. It was noon before he came striding back from the Chief's House next day, his face a permanent red, the salt of anger-dried sweat on his forehead.

We gathered to listen, sorry only that Collins was not also there to hear. But Collins, with one pajamaed leg dangling out of the hammock, his baggage increased by a live chicken tied to its pole, had gone lurching profanely off in the general direction of the Ivory Coast.

We cooled Cort off, put a wet towel about his head, and gathered about him in that half-pitying curiosity one accords to the account of troubles which one has been through oneself.

We knew all about that house of Claude Brue's. First, the difficulty of getting in at all—ten minutes of pounding on the nail-studded doors, with the walls throwing back a furnace of white heat; another ten minutes of shouting at the increasing knot of negro servants, their eyes filmed with a deliberately irritating stupidity. Then stairs, black and narrow; a sense of interminable rooms, cluttered, dim, full of a queer, nigger reek. There had been a sick woman in one of them; Cort said—a gaunt creature lying huddled alone on a bare floor in the midst of a swarm of flies.

He had been all eagerness for whatever it was he was going to see. "A sort of a chief," we had told him, and he had had visions of a brawny black creature, wrapped in leopard skins, to whom one offered presents of glass beads and copper wire. Copper wire and beads were inextricably mixed in with his ideas of African business. Small wonder that he could hardly credit his eyes when he saw the reality.

The room alone would have been enough to make him doubt them, with its walls painted in a sort of futuristic nightmare of green and purple stripes and spots, and furnished in incongruous red velvet and gilt, with a huge cut-glass chandelier, black with roosting flies half stupefied by the smoke from burning pastilles.

But Claude Brue himself—a slim, yellow-skinned fellow of about Cort's own age, clad in shepherd's plaid and patent leather, reclining delicately on a red-and-gilt couch—Small wonder that Cort's brain whirled. "A sort of a chief"—copper, beads, and black brawn—and then this lemon-tinted dandy in that rotten room, toying with a gold-tipped cigarette, surveying his guest through the liquidly insolent eyes of a pampered pomeranian!

Pouie gum had disappeared in the first sentence of the interview, waved disdainfully aside by Brue's yellow fingers, and in its place had come Paris.

"He says that he lived there!" cried Cort. "He says it's the only fit place for a gentleman to live in. I've never lived there, hang him!"

We laughed even while we sympathized, for we could see it all so well—Brue's languid dribble of Parisian shibboleths—Verlaine, Matisse, Boule' Miche', grisettes—all the dear old stock phrases; and Cort, struggling with his astonishment, trying to make connections. Only once had he caught a glimpse of what lay behind that front of mock Paris when, in desperation, he

had wrenched the conversation back to pouie gum and suggested going to the bush himself to set the gatherers to work. Startled into naturalness, Brue had sat up.

"But they would never do it—not for you! That is only for me. There are things up there in the bush—"

The surprise of the answer had been proof of its truth, and Cort had had a flashing glimpse of all the things he did not know—league upon league of uncharted swamp; flame-colored trees in the dusk of the bush; naked gum gatherers snaking their way through the green gloom, pygmies lost in those vast silences of vegetation.

Just a glimpse; then it was gone. Through the slats of the shutters came the light and heat, the voices of negro women, the thud of stone pestles pounding plantain fouffou, the inescapable black reek, while Brue prattled, parrotlike, of Gauguin and Petit Guignol, after the fashion of a precocious child showing off.

"I offered him a thousand dollars a ton for five hundred tons a year!" Cort wailed.

He would do nothing with Brue on that score, we knew, for buried somewhere under the great, wallowing bulk of the Chief's House was at least half a million pounds' worth of gold dust and nuggets, the age-old, secret wealth of those dominant families, the product of hundreds of years of loot and tribute; and what nigger will do anything like work unless necessity drives him to it? But Cort, trained to belief in the power of money, could not credit that any one could refuse it.

"Five hundred thousand a year and most of it sheer profit!" he went on. "Think what you could do with it!" I told him. And what do you think he said? He just stared solemnly and told me he had done everything. What can you do with a fellow like that?"

We knew that, to Claude Brue, the

refusal of a white man's necessity would have been cheap at half the price. The connection that so evaded Cort was plain to us. Those Parisian pretenses, that bored contempt of trade, were in reality sheer nigger, the crass, childish egotism of a black on horseback; just Africa—that was all—the same Africa that was all about us, sprawling and scratching in the dust under her intolerable skies.

"But I simply have to have that gum—somehow," Cort murmured.

He had forgotten us for the moment, listening again to those footsteps to which his ears were attuned—the sharp, clean tread of drafted men, that other, industrial tramp, tramp, which it was his task to help shoe.

In other times we could have brought pressure on Claude Brue, but the same disarrangement which had started the whole affair was blocking that, too. With England, that policeman of the waste places of the earth, severely busy elsewhere, we had to step softly to keep things quiet. And Brue knew it; though we put up the best front we could, the whole land knew it.

"Understand this," Cort cried, springing up in exasperation, "I'm going to have that gum, somehow or other—and I don't give a damn what way I get it, either!"

And up above, beyond the brassily indifferent skies, the little gods who take people at their own words must have heard, and noted, and laughed.

It was to the Casa Santierra that we took Cort to cool off. We were accustomed to take our troubles to be soothed by the señora's capable hands. There was a moon that night—an African moon, purplish, subtly different, as if tainted by the airs through which it shone. The patio was all black and green and silver; the pink of the lanterns was lost in that flood of light and shadow.

Lucy sang, with an untrained sweet-

ness tinged by the trailing minors that she had heard all her life. The señora petted Cort, sparkling in sympathetic indignation. He began to talk, with his strange mixture of business and romance, telling them all it meant to his country for him to get that pouie gum; and Lucy's mandolin slipped from her lap as she listened.

"The feet of the young men!" she murmured, sitting there in the moonlight, her face just a warmer tone of her white dress, her hair a pale flare of gold above her black brows and eyes. "The feet of the young men—marching to victory—Oh—I see—I see!"

Soon they drifted away together, as was natural—the only two youngsters among us. We heard their voices from unexpected corners of the courtyard, caught gleams of their white clothes between the stalks of the bananas. A silence fell on us; a silence of memories of other lands, other moons, other girls, and other youngsters, who had been ourselves. It was the señora who gave voice to what was in our thoughts, her own memories busy with pictures of Lucy's father:

"If he should be able to get the gum, will he stay here to look after it?"

"Probably," we answered. "And he'll get it, sooner or later. These Americans always do get what they go after."

It was just after that that the unexpected happened, breaking across the quiet of the patio, with its lanterns pink against the green-and-silver leaves.

Just a knock on the gate—that was all. But one never knows what a knock on a gate may mean, nor what may enter with the opening of the door. Probably Collins, returned at some whim, we thought, for only white men knocked upon the Santierra gate. As we watched the black porter shuffling toward the door, we prepared to give a facetious welcome. Then the grina

dropped from our faces as we saw Claude Brue.

The silence was thick as he came mincing forward, in full evening dress, even to yellow gloves and monocle. That he should be there at all brought home to us the general topsy-turviness of the world. Except for that, he would never have come, we knew, and even so he had had to get quite drunk before he dared. The señora sat speechless. Lucy and Cort stood apart, she vaguely alarmed at the unprecedented situation, he merely puzzled.

We glanced at the señora, uneasy at the mounting sparks in her eyes. Brue's intrusion was pure insolence, of course, but, after all, the fellow had power, of an underground sort, and in these upset days— But the señora was all woman, surrounded by men and probably more confident of them than they were of themselves just then. She spoke, relapsing into Spanish in her anger:

"Quasi, tell the man"—the inflection of that "hombre" was like a whip-lash—"tell the man that he has made a mistake and that the door is behind him."

It was done now; whatever came, we would have to stand back of her, and she knew it. Brue stood there, swaying in his patent-leather pumps, the fumes of drink letting loose the half tide of black blood in him.

"Hoo! So I am not good enough to come to the Casa Santierro!" he sneered. "I, Claude Brue, the friend of the white ladies of Paris! But in Grand Pram, where I am chief, I may not even come to the house of a—"

He never finished. We would have seen to that, stopping, before ever he could utter it, the word we knew was upon his lips. But even as we sprang up, Cort was before us. What was about to be said he could not tell, but he knew that it was something which might not be uttered in that patio. With

his fingers round the fellow's throat, he propelled Brue backward at a run, straight back, out through the open gate. There was the sound of a thud, a choking snarl; then Cort came back again, settling his cuffs.

"I don't think he'll trouble you again, señora," he said quietly.

He closed the gate upon the glimpse of the lesser lagoon outside, with its moon-sheened waters between the gaunt trunks of the palms, and outwardly the courtyard became itself again, a place of shut-in charm in a dreary land. But there were other things too subtle to be shut out by the mere closing of a door—things which had entered with Claude Brue and which remained after his ejection like a stain upon the air.

Cort we saw no more until we left, except as a white gleam, a laughing murmur from between the banana fronds. But in Lucy's face, as she bade him good night, we read plainly that the last of the Santierro women had found her dream prince.

III.

After the incident of the patio, things were different with Cort. For the first time, he had really touched Africa—literally smashed into it, in fact—and the change had come, strangely enough, even as Collins had suggested, through a woman.

But to smash into a strange and tropic country is sometimes a risk, since one takes one's ideas with one. It is really better, as a rule, to melt into it via the perspiration route. Cort still regarded the Casa Santierro much as he would the Carolina mansion of some old Southern family, all charm and out-at-elbows dignity. And we, knowing his ideas, felt we could tell him nothing. He was rather out of our hands then, anyhow—there are few things so potent as a woman for taking a man out of other men's hands—so we sat by and

watched the little play of the courtyard, the increasing dreaminess of Lucy's eyes. A comedy, we thought it, as charming, and no deeper, than those painted comedies on French fans. The masculine attitude toward affairs of love is always that they are comedies.

Cort was more determined than ever to get the gum. With Claude Brue now definitely out of it, the only thing for him to do was to go himself to the bush, and, with the help of the señora, he set about organizing his expedition.

Again, knowing those things which Cort did not and which he would not credit, a couple of us took occasion to call upon Claude Brue—not by the front door, this time. We chose our time well, just at dusk, walking in unannounced by the back way and straight into the compound.

It was a place that Cort had never seen and that would only have puzzled him the more. The blotched bulk of the house rose from a riot of haphazard vegetation and tumble-down shacks, and in the center of it all, by a smoking, sizzling fire of green wood, sat Claude Brue, taking his evening meal among some five generations of his black-and-tan family. No dress clothes, no Paris, no patent leather this time; wrapped in a strip of country cloth, he squatted on a three-legged stool, thrusting his yellow fingers into the common bowl of meat and rice.

Our interview was short, but effective. Upstairs, in that green-and-purple room with its complications of Matisse and early Victoria, things might have been different. The memories of Paris, the one city in the world which has no color line, would have upheld him. But down there, flat on the steaming African soil, he was all nigger. When we left, we knew that, though Cort would probably get no gum, his life would be reasonably safe. There would at least be no datura juice

in his coffee or ground glass in his fooufou, while he was up in the bush.

We might possibly have done something about the gum, too, but we were a little angry at Cort for insisting on going off to the hinterland at a time when it was so necessary to keep things quiet. Besides, we could not quite credit his belief that the winning of the war and the general fate of the world were bound up in pouie gum.

He went, rather elaborately, with far too much baggage, far too many men, but there was a certain satisfying gorgeousness about it that matched his confident youth. Strapped up in khaki, flushed with his boyish vision, he might have been some sort of young crusader off on a Grail quest for the salving of the feet of humanity; and from the roof of the Casa Santieria Lucy and the señora waved and waved, until he was swallowed up by the high grass and the plaintain gardens.

He had even designed a flag to be carried at the head of his little caravan—a red thing on a white ground, which might have been a flying fish, but was really meant for a winged shoe sole. Since he disdained a hammock and proposed to march, we suggested another flag, bearing the Cort slogan: "They Walk the Earth," but he was impervious to our sarcasm. Perhaps that is the final test of a real crusader—that he should be impervious to humor.

We missed him, for he had come across our African inertia like a clean breath from some keener land. It was a month before we heard of him again. Then he suddenly turned up one evening, without warning. He was in a hammock this time, for those long marches under the sun had done their work, and he lay there a pallid ghost of his former self, muttering with fever.

The señora claimed him, and we carried him up and laid him in a giant mahogany bed, with armorial bearings

in faded gilt, a relic of that governor of those bygone Spanish days from whom the Santierras were descended.

From his head man we heard the story of the expedition, and it was simple almost to nothingness. They had seen no one—neither chief nor gum gatherer nor woman nor child; every village had been deserted. It must have been rather eerie, coming evening after evening on those silent bush clearings—the black-green wall of trees, the flocks of screaming parrakeets wheeling overhead against the lemon sky, the scattering ring of gardens, the street of wattle-and-clay houses, with the ashes still hot on the fire stones and the goats foraging unchecked, but not a soul in sight. No resistance, no unpleasantness; the people had merely disappeared, swallowed up somewhere under that vegetal expanse, leaving only the sense of wary, peering eyes behind every trunk.

Claude Brue's work, of course, with some unconscious help from Cort himself, with his khaki, his fifty men, and his flag. Brue had merely sent word to the villages that a white man was coming who would tax the people and take the young men away to the great war over the seas.

So it had gone, each day—no resistance, just that mirrorlike inertia against which Cort had dashed himself in an ever-increasing exasperation that had finally turned to fever in his veins.

We did not worry about him at first; his constitution was unimpaired and we had had experience of the señora's nursing. But weeks went by and he grew no better. Pouie gum had gone deeper with him than we had imagined, forgetting how seriously twenty-four can take things—and itself.

Failure—that was his burden; probably the first failure he had ever encountered in his cheerful, civilized young life. By day the factory sat on his chest; through the nights, mingling

with that African slip-slap of bare feet, the tramp of men marched through his head. Lucy Santierra seemed always with him, the silent listener to his mutterings, the consoler of his moments of lucid exhaustion. She was paling under the strain of it, but there was a luminous brightness about her, and on a day of gray heat, the señora told us the secret of it:

"He will take her back to America when he goes. They will be married—here—in this house."

In the courtyard the green fronds of the bananas were wilting under the torrid gray pall of the sky, but the señora sparkled as with the cool fountain of some inner joy. We wondered at that, for it meant losing Lucy; it meant, also, the end of that hundred-year tradition of the Santierras with which we had imagined the señora to be so satisfied. But that look on the señora's face told us many things which, manlike, we had never suspected simply because she had never before betrayed them.

Lucy Santierra going to America as Cort's wife! We were fond of Lucy and, strictly speaking, there was no reason why she should not be the wife of any man; no reason at all except just the one that she could not help. We wondered what we ought to do, wishing, in that freemasonry of mutual sex, that we had spoken more freely to Cort before it was too late.

It was Collins who decided us, rioting back unexpectedly from the Ivory Coast. As another American, he had a better right to speak than we. That night Cort was worse and up in the big, dim chamber where he lay, Collins unlocked his dispatch box and spread the contents out in the light of the candles.

Hovering pallidly in the shadows, Lucy watched. There is something so horribly final in such a rifling of a man's private affairs, as if he had no longer any title to secrecy or reserve.

"Is it as bad as that?" she moaned.

"It's as bad as it can be," Collins answered, his face settling into grim lines.

Through the hush came Cort's mutterings, mingling with the rustle of the tamarinds outside in the blue-green night. Factory, feet, and war; tramp, tramp, tramp, walking the earth; and failure, always failure—that was the corroding burden of it, sapping the roots of his vitality.

"I know his kind," Collins nodded, listening to that perpetual murmur of speech, drip-dripping from Cort's lips like drops of his very lifeblood. "If he doesn't get the gum, he'll simply fret himself out—that's all. Claude Brue's the hub of the whole thing. There are two ways to deal with a fellow like that—make him afraid of you or give him what he wants."

"It's too late for the first. He knows too much," we said.

"And the second?"

"The brute doesn't seem to want anything—except not to get the gum."

"Oh, yes, he does," Collins declared. "Every man wants something or other."

His gaze fell full upon Lucy Santtierra, and she shivered under it, as at a cold breath across the closeness of the night. With a shrug, Collins turned to the dispatch box.

"Well, we'll at least see whom we must notify when the worst has happened."

There were letters, bills of credit, some cash, some photographs. He spread the latter out: the factory—we had seen those; a youngish man, with that expression of tired alertness which we call "the American face," probably Cort's father, from the resemblance; his mother, a fine, dominant woman with a look of keen intelligence; two sisters, younger editions of the same; some girls in chiffons or tennis clothes, all a credit to Cort's taste.

A strange contrast they made in that room, Boston and the Berkshires looking out from their frames upon Grand

Pram. In the cool poise of their pictured gaze, we seemed to notice again all those little things to which we had become so accustomed—the rasping tick-tick of a death-watch spider up in the rafters; the creak of the palm branches outside; the candles, one thrust into an old silver holder, the other into an empty perfume bottle; that all-pervading, sickly nigger reek, which even the walls of the *Casa Santtierra* could not keep out—all those things that so stamped the house as African.

It was toward Lucy that we turned, feeling that somehow the situation was for her. She stood it well, for she had her father's blood in her, straight and pale, her brows black beneath her red-gold hair. But she shivered again as she met the look of keen power on the faces of those pictured women.

"Fine people, those," Collins went on. "Better get acquainted with them, so that you'll know them when you meet them."

"Ah, then you mean that he will get well!" she cried, brushing all else aside as she caught at the half promise in his words.

"He'll get well provided he gets that gum."

"And—if he doesn't?"

"If he doesn't?" Collins shrugged in a complete detachment which gave his words all the terrible authority of impartiality. "I know his kind—high-strung, going on their nerve till they drop. That kind can't stand failure; they're not used to it. And those women, they aren't used to having their men fail, either. That the odds were all against him would make no difference to them. They don't understand this country, you see, and they never, never will—because they don't want to."

What Collins was about we could not tell, but Lucy seemed to know. Like the dimming of a lamp, that luminous-

ness left her. But it was all between those two; they played their little drama alone on a stage which they alone could see, with that pictured row of women oddly like the boxes, coldly waiting to give their verdict on the play.

"And if he doesn't get the gum?" Lucy asked again, with a gray steadiness.

"He'll go out—like that," said Collins brutally, puffing at a candle.

Like the last expiring leap of a flame, the light glowed again in Lucy, white and brilliant. Steadily she crossed to the bed and bent over it, pressing her lips to Cort's dry and fevered mouth. He knew her, his fingers groping for hers in the midst of his mutterings, with a sigh of her name:

"Lucy?"

"Yes. Here I am."

Then that ever-recurring refrain again, like a burden which he could not drop:

"Oh, Lucy, I'm a failure! How can I go home—a failure?"

We could not say whence came the impression of a struggle about her in that moment. Her face did not change, nor the hands that held his so firmly, nor her voice, nor her eyes. It was rather that light that wavered violently, like a flame blown upon by a storm. Then it leaped again in triumphant steadiness.

"No, you have succeeded," she said. "I've come to tell you that Claude Brue has consented, and that the gum will begin to come in from the bush very soon now."

She stood a moment as if forcing her words back into his clouded brain, printing them on its cells by her own radiance. Like the washing off of lines of painted care, the strain left his face and sleep took hold of him. Without a backward glance, Lucy left the room, and through the silence of her going came the slight rattle of the photograph frames as Collins put them away again.

Her words came true. In a few days, the pouie gum began to arrive, in scattering lots, and Cort, back in his room at the trading post, grew rapidly better. You could actually see him revive with each fresh load, as if those sticky masses were drafts of water in a desert—waters of success in his desert of failure.

He asked constantly for Lucy, his hand groping for hers as he awoke from the deep sleeps of his convalescence; but we told him that she was ill. Let Collins explain it, we thought. He had started the whole thing; now let him finish it. But it was not until two weeks later that Collins spoke, on a day when a stray steamer, running on a war-frazzled schedule, dropped anchor off the lagoon.

"We're going to dress you now," he said, lifting Cort from his cot. "Your traps are all packed, and inside of an hour, you'll be on that steamer on your way home again."

"But—Lucy—" gasped Cort.

"That's all over," said Collins, with the deliberate brutality of one anxious only to get a hard task done with. A cruel thing, we thought, with others of us there, but perhaps our alien presence served to keep things in check.

"You mean—" Cort gasped, wavering on the edge of the cot, his fever-bleached face and feet as white as the sheets.

"There is no longer any Lucy Santerra."

"She is—dead?"

It was only a whisper that came from his lips, and we held our breath, hoping that Collins would catch at the chance for a lie. We remembered the fronded shadows of that courtyard, with its star-hung roof of night sky; Cort and Lucy gliding palely among the stalks; the great red-and-yellow bunches of fruit dripping the honey of their ripeness; the smiles, the murmurs, the con-

fidences and kisses of that brief tropic enchantment. Let him keep it, we half groaned to ourselves; let him have the memory at least. Back in Massachusetts, he would never learn the truth. But Collins went on, like a ruthless surgeon cutting across exposed nerves:

"No, she isn't dead, but she's married. Two weeks ago—to Claude Brue."

"Married—to Claude Brue! And all the time that she—that I——"

Cort finished with a high-pitched laugh across which Collins slashed again, going deep after the very roots of the pain:

"You came to Africa for pouie gum, didn't you? Well, you have it, and in this world, when you get what you want, you're apt to get other things with it. You have the gum, and you have it in the only way you could get it—through Claude Brue. And the only way to get things is to give people what they want for them."

"What they want?" breathed Cort, a suspicion breaking through the hard misery of his eyes.

"Yes, and what is it that a Claude Brue, a half white, most wants? I'll tell you—a white wife. One really white or"—Collins paused, holding Cort's gaze meaningfully with his own—"one *really* white—or else—a Lucy Santierra."

The bellow of the steamer, impatient to be off, struck across the silence. We were grateful to it, for it gave us things to do, a drug of motion which we plastered on to the situation. We slammed things into trunks, Cort sitting by in

white-lipped silence, while Collins slipped links into his cuffs, like a personification of that implacable continuity of things which takes no heed of feelings.

Cort never spoke to any of us again; probably he could not. We watched him go, marveling at the hiddenness of the roots of things. It seemed like those flowering creepers up in the bush—a brilliant blossom before your eyes, but its stem inextricably tangled with a hundred others, its roots perhaps a hundred yards away, lost in the general smother, impossible to trace.

Naked gum gatherers snaking through the bush, puppets dancing at the ends of those invisible threads held by the yellow fingers of Claude Brue; the sky-ceiled patio of the casa, from which the last of the Santierra women had gone, breaking its tradition that only a white man might open its doors for her—a hundred-year tradition through which the Santierras had grown steadily whiter, whiter, but never quite white; the walls of a factory; cool, poised women; and that blazing announcement that "Cort Shoes Walk the Earth."

We could hear them walking in that instant—the clean tread of drafted men, the broken tramp, tramp of that industrial army, their footsteps deftly hushed by the Cort sole of pouie gum and rubber.

"People never know what they're really walking on."

But to us it was as if they were walking, softly, endlessly, relentlessly, on the pulsating heart of Lucy Santierra.





A Romantic Liar

By Lawrence Perry

Author of "Dan Merrithew,"
"Prince or Chauffeur," etc.

CHAPTER I.

ROBERT TRENT—or, rather, "Bobbie" Trent, as he had been almost nationally known in the days, a year or two prior to this story, when he had been a back-field star at Harvard—entered the offices of Trent, Elwell & Co. on Wall Street wearing an air of gloom altogether inconsistent with his apparent state of sturdy health and the brilliant sunlight and tingling air of a noontide in early autumn.

Tommy Elwell, his cousin and partner, heavy and somewhat prosaic, regarded him venomously from across his rosewood desk.

"Where the devil have you been?"

The reply was somber:

"At the Royal Flying Corps headquarters."

"Did they take you?"

Trent shrugged, threw his hat and stick on a near-by lounge, drew off his right glove, and studied his hand, frowning. It was a perfectly good member, save that it lacked most of the index finger and the upper joint of the second.

"Well"—Elwell, whose nearsightedness had kept him out of everything having to do with war, shrugged ungraciously—"the French Government gave you a cross for it. And you *would* run away to drive an ammunition wagon on top of a bull market."

"Oh, blub, blub!" Trent seated himself at his desk and, leaning forward, seized a paper weight, shuffling it slowly from hand to hand. "They've turned me down everywhere," he

mourned, "from Plattsburg to the naval reserve. The regular-army surgeons laughed at me when I tried to enlist as a private or a sutler or anything. The Canadian chaps were more polite—but equally firm. I'm through, I tell you!" He swung around in his chair, facing Elwell. "Just the same, I put it all over Pat Ransome at racquets this morning, even if he has landed a captaincy. Which isn't so bad for a cripple. Cripple!" He doubled his fist and then returned to the paper weight.

Elwell, struck by a sudden thought, scowled at his cousin.

"Racquets, eh? That's the real reason you were late!" As Trent regarded him curiously, he went on: "Your father called up. We're to meet him for luncheon at the Bankers' Club. Oh, I don't know what he wants. I fancy he's anxious to know when we're going to do enough business to pay office rent."

"Business!" The young man's face depicted the extreme of repugnance. "Do you suppose business interests *me*? I want action, Tommy, *action*, do you understand? If father thinks he's going to chain me to a desk—" He paused. "Office rent, eh? What does he think this is—a bucket shop? We made enough last week to pay the clerks' salaries, didn't we? It's the first time we—you—have done it since we started. You'd think the governor'd appreciate that lift."

Elwell smiled sympathetically.

"Oh, he *does*. At least his secretary came out yesterday, when I made the

weekly report, and told me the chief wished him to say he was prostrated."

"Well"—Trent kicked gently at a chair—"who's doing anything? Tell me that. I bet if he stood at the corner of Broad and Wall, he couldn't give Aluminum preferred away. But he needn't worry." Trent fingered a pile of mail, mainly market letters and advertisements, registering the while profound contempt.

Elwell grinned, rising from his chair. "Bobbie, there's one sure thing. If he doesn't worry, we won't."

"No." Trent seized his hat, stick, and gloves, and the two set forth for the designated club at the top of a towering office building, where they found Horatio Trent seating himself at his favorite table with the meticulous assistance of the head waiter.

Horatio Trent's varying moods were matters of daily concern to many important persons in the railroad and financial world, not more so at this moment, however, than to the two young men summoned to luncheon, who, despite their airy attitude in the seclusion of their own office, really looked forward to the prospective interview with emotions that included something of trepidation. But their sharp glances, as they entered the great apartment, caught the man in the act of a gruff pleasantry to the head waiter, which furnished all necessary evidence that he was in good spirits and rather inclined to loquacity. With this cue, Trent and Elwell advanced briskly and smiling.

"Good morning, father." Without awaiting acknowledgement, Trent went on: "The Royal Flying Corps turned me down this morning."

A gleam crossed the financier's face.

"Your mother will be glad to hear that. Sit down, Robert, Tommy." He glanced at the two with steel-gray eyes that glowed dull from under heavy brows, and then looked beyond them,

passing a hand across his grizzled moustache.

He didn't know his son very well; he had been too busy. He had conducted the boy's life as he had several of his branch railroad lines--under the direct control of others, maintaining purely general supervision. Generally speaking, knowledge of his son's career in the days of earliest boyhood had come to him from his wife very much in the shape of weekly or monthly reports--just as he got reports of his subsidiary railroad interests.

He had had some idea of putting the boy into the shops and making him learn railroading, as his father had, from the bottom up; but the mother had vetoed this, with her son's hearty approval. So Bobbie had gone to a preparatory school in New England, devoted to the early development of snobs—Trent, for some innate reason, was one of the few exceptions which annually occur in the grist sent forth by this seat of learning—and then he had entered Harvard, where he had learned to appreciate culture for itself, and to respect honest blood and dirt as a three-year member of the varsity eleven. Now, after six months amid the grim things of the French front, he was still a clean-cut, likable chap with a fresh viewpoint and ardent instincts, whose only serious purpose in life thus far—that of serving his country as a soldier—had been defeated as a result of a shell wound while driving a *camion* for the French army.

For his father he had respect and profound admiration; this was revealed in his face as he looked at the big, rugged man across the table.

"Have either of you two boys," he was asking, "ever run across a girl in this city named"—he glanced at a memorandum in his hand—"Eleanor Lowell?"

The two young men looked thoughtful and then shook their heads.

"Then I want you to meet her." The captain of industry smiled grimly. "One or the other of you, that is—as a matter of business."

"Is she worth meeting?" grinned the son, adding that of course this did not signify, so long as it was a question of business.

"No, it doesn't signify," was the reply. "None the less, my information is that she is an attractive young woman."

"She's mine!" cried Trent.

"No, mine!" objected his partner.

"I spoke first," protested Bobbie. "However—"

He reached into his pocket and drew out a coin, flipping it into the air, while the captain of industry leaned back with the amused expression of a man watching two puppies at play. Elwell called wrong, and Trent, replacing the coin, turned to his father.

"Whatever it is, I'm ready," he said. "In fact, I'm more than ready."

Horatio Trent nodded.

"For some time," he opened, "I've been unobtrusively, if rather actively, interested in the Consolidated Fuel Corporation. In Colorado, there's an old mining property in which, some years ago, we bought a half interest—bought it cheap, as it was supposed to be pretty nearly worked out. We wanted it for future reference—perhaps to connect up with some other property eventually. I don't know. It was before my time in the company."

"But what about the girl?"

A momentary gleam crossed the railroad man's fierce eyes, and Trent, who knew the look, murmured an apology. The older man lighted a cigar and went on:

"We secured our interest from a man named Pinkham—Jonathan Pinkham. The outstanding half interest was held by a party named Adrian Lowell."

"You didn't secure his interest?" asked Elwell.

"He had died prior to our coming in. That's where this girl, Eleanor Lowell, enters. Adrian Lowell was her father. He died when she was a child. Now, attached to his will was a deed in trust, in which the wish was expressed that she marry his partner's son, Robert Pinkham. The boy and girl—mere children, as I say—were playmates in Denver, and the Lowells and the Pinkhams at the time were very close. Later, there were quarrels, and the two families have been separated for years. All this, of course, after Adrian Lowell's death."

Horatio Trent, unaccustomed to related discourse, paused as if for breath.

"Anyway," he went on at length, "under the terms of the trust deed, Robert Pinkham and this girl, Eleanor Lowell, are to share the half interest which Adrian Lowell owned in the mine, provided they marry any time prior to the girl's twenty-first birthday."

"That's like a play or a story," observed Trent.

The older man admitted the logic of the comment by a gesture with his cigar.

"At first my lawyers thought it was a mere whim. Lowell's reputation was that of a crusty, peculiar old party—none too straight, either. But even so—in spite, also, of the fact that he had always been fonder of the boy, Pinkham, than of his own daughter—the attorneys probed for a more satisfactory reason for his action."

"And they found it?" The two young men, deeply interested in this unwanted merger of business and romance, leaned forward over the table.

"Yes. This Adrian Lowell got his half interest through foreclosure proceedings involving the Western Colorado Fuel Company. He was a trifle hasty, I guess. For in studying the papers, my attorneys found a flaw in those foreclosure transactions. Lowell

probably discovered the bad link in his chain of title some years, perhaps, after he secured his half interest."

"How would that affect him?" asked Elwell.

"Why, with that flaw, his half interest would legally revert to Jonathan Pinkham, who held the other half interest, provided Pinkham's title was sound. That is the law. Pinkham's title, as it happened, was sound."

Horatio Trent puffed reflectively for a moment.

"So Lowell knew that if he left this interest, with its bad antecedents, to his daughter, she would lose it if she ever tried to do anything with it that would involve inspection of title. She would lose it to Jonathan Pinkham, or to his heir, Robert Pinkham."

"I see," cried Trent. "So the clever Adrian fixed up a scheme whereby, if his daughter lost the interest, she would lose it only to her husband—in other words, she wouldn't lose it at all."

"That's it. But Pinkham didn't think as much of his interest as Lowell did of his. Shortly before his death, he sold it to us. Later, when we wanted to get the other half interest—Lowell's—we bunked up against this trust deed."

"Supposing Eleanor Lowell and Robert Pinkham didn't marry?" asked Tommy Elwell.

"In that event, the interest in the mine was to go to the testator's brother, Caleb Lowell, of this city."

"Since I'm to meet the girl," said the younger Trent, "let's see, father, if I grasp the thing. Your company bought a half interest in a mine from Jonathan Pinkham. You later wanted the other half, but couldn't get it because the stock was tied up in a trust deed. This deed stipulated that if Eleanor Lowell married Jonathan Pinkham's son, Robert, the two would share in the half interest. Now, if the two did not marry, the stock would go to Adrian's brother

—and Eleanor Lowell's uncle—Caleb Lowell of this city."

The great man gestured approval.

"Jonathan Pinkham," he resumed, "died several years ago. His son is in France with the Y. M. C. A. Now Eleanor Lowell has just passed twenty. So far as we can learn, she has not seen Robert Pinkham since the two were little children in Denver. Apparently they have no intention of marrying. But we have been unable to make certain."

"Am I to prevent the marriage?" A frown was gathering upon Bobbie Trent's features.

"No, we wish they would marry—because both their signatures to a deed of sale would not only give us the half interest, but Pinkham's signature would straighten out the flaw in the title to the Lowell half interest. You catch that, don't you?"

"Sure." Young Trent thought a moment. "I've been wondering, father, why you should want this other stock, but I get it now. Your engineers have decided that the mine is valuable."

"Exactly," was the reply. "Adrian Lowell suspected this when he bought the stocks, but he never could convince Pinkham. So the mine was never adequately worked. Our experts have made an interesting report about it."

"Then," broke in Bobbie, beginning to frown again, "you want me to arrange the marriage. I don't think that's quite in my line, father."

"I don't want you to do anything," was the rejoinder, "except to meet this girl and find out whether she and Pinkham intend to marry. If they don't carry out the terms of the deed, and the interest goes to Caleb Lowell—"

"You can knock him out on the flaw in the title."

"Well"—Horatio Trent gestured impatiently—"but it would only revert back to young Pinkham, and young Pinkham's stepfather, James Olyphant,

is a mining man, a rival of ours. There'd be all sorts of trouble—and of a sort we don't want to open up in Colorado. Caleb Lowell, by the way, is a cheap dabbler in shorts, a market snooper, and I have reason to believe he's had a rag-and-bone engineer prying over the property recently. This indicates he's preparing to enter upon ownership at the proper time."

Horatio Trent took his watch from his pocket, glanced at it, and pushed back his chair.

"As I say, the point is to find out all about this girl. Get an inside line, too, on her uncle, Caleb Lowell. His wife, I might add, is the suffrage leader, Doctor Julia Judson Lowell. The girl, an orphan, has lived with them ever since her father's death."

He arose from the table.

"I want you to do a good, delicate job on this, Robert, because it's rather important, especially in view of present fuel conditions."

Trent regarded his father thoughtfully.

"I understand from what you say that she's a rattling good sort. I certainly ought to dig up some one who knows her. Once introduced and I can go ahead."

His father gestured.

"If it were as easy as all that, I'd get any one to do it," he said. "One of my clerks, for instance. One thing is certain. The Lowells mustn't know who you are, for in that case Caleb Lowell would smell a rat and thus suspect my interest in the deal."

"I see. Have you any suggestions?" Trent looked hopefully at his father, who frowned.

"My boy, I'm leaving that to your wits. I and the rest of us are stumped. I don't care how you do it. What I want is information. You two boys needn't hurry."

He turned and went rapidly toward the coat room.

"There," remarked Elwell, refilling his coffee cup, "is a man worth many millions, a national factor in business, who hasn't time to sit a moment over his cigar and digest his food." He sighed and studied his cigar with luxurious contentment. "I wouldn't change places with him."

"When you speak of him," returned Trent, "be pleased to remember he's my father and your uncle—and that he's working for us. Tommy, I begin rather to fancy this idea of his."

"You would." Elwell grinned and shrugged.

"Well, I do." He paused, gazing absently out over the roofs of the city. "I scent romance, Tommy."

"Bobbie," warned his cousin, "you be careful."

Trent followed this sage advice by spending an hour or two of the afternoon in the offices of his father's attorney's; and later he might have been found in a comfortable chair in the library of the Cavaliers' Club, studying a *dossier* compiled as a result of his conference with the lawyers.

CHAPTER II.

This chapter can begin nowhere but in the home of Caleb Lowell, or, rather—to pay strict observance to the relative importance of personalities—the home of Doctor Julia Judson Lowell, in Gramercy Park. The library was one of those congenial rooms whose atmosphere suggests that they are utilized comfortably in solid pursuits. There was a reading table, with a green-shaded lamp, littered with books and magazines. The books were of the wholesome sort—the older three-deck novels, essays, and biographies. The magazines were devoted to reviews and propaganda. Around the table, which might be termed the heart of the apartment, were comfortable chairs, while in a near-by corner was a heavy, work-

manlike desk, containing writing materials, a litter of papers, and a telephone. At this desk sat Doctor Julia Judson Lowell.

Doctor Julia Judson Lowell was an advanced woman who had acquired about every attainment possible to advanced womanhood. She was a doctor of medicine; she was a doctor of laws—an honorary degree conferred upon her by a great university devoted to the principle of coeducation; she was a contributing editor of a magazine devoted to advanced womanhood; she was a "principal speaker;" she was an intrepid organizer; and she was married.

As to the last, she might have done better had she had time and inclination to apply to it her intellectual powers. But there had been other considerations more important and more engrossing; matrimony had been merely one of her minor ambitions. It was about as necessary to what she wanted to do and be in this world as, say, a practical knowledge of pedagogy. So she had acquired, in her time, both a husband and a classroom. Her brief year of experience as a teacher was a long way behind now, but she still had her husband. And—to cover the ground thoroughly—he still had her.

But whereas she accepted Caleb Lowell with the philosophy of one who realizes that crosses must be borne in this life, he, on his part, was not equipped for bearing crosses. Thus constituted, his life would have been one of constant and painful attrition had it not been for the fact that during nine-tenths of her waking hours, Doctor Lowell was too busy to be aware of anything more than his bare existence. The remaining time was that devoted to meals. Both ate but to live, and the process was sufficiently absorbing to reduce verbal intercourse to monosyllables. At night they occupied separate rooms—they always had, in fact,

Lowell's interests were largely financial. He was of the sort to be found in the offing when great men were about. No one was more expert than he in picking up the crumbs they let fall. Infrequently he retrieved something some valuable than a crumb.

Everything about his demeanor suggested nervous intensity. In attire, he typified the average man of to-day, who declines to keep pace sartorially with his fifty-odd years. But his face presented an anachronism, inasmuch as it was flanked on either side by the side whiskers of the walnut period, connected gracefully by a mustache. His neck was thin; the sparse hair on his temples stood out rather assertively; he had a prominent, bellicose nose. A trifle above medium height, spare of frame, his whole outward personality suggested the sort of man who in clubs has a chronic grievance against the servants, who in church circles heads the minority who dislike the rector, who in politics is what used to be known as a "mugwump."

Just now he sat in his capacious leather chair at one side of the reading table, studying the financial page of his evening paper. His countenance was somber; the corners of his eyes were screwed into irritated lines.

So there they sat, Caleb Lowell and his wife, childless, loveless—as we understand marital devotion—unnatural appendages one to the other—speaking evidence, as it may be regarded, of at least one failure in the life of this eminent woman.

Doctor Lowell's sister, Matilda Judson, occupied another chair. She was a woman of perhaps fifty years, with the sweet, patient, perplexed face of one who has spent her life ministering to the happiness of others and having little of her own save that which lies in service. Her present occupation bespoke her character and personality; she was knitting. Matilda Judson, in

fine, was a relict of the darker ages of her sex.

And now Eleanor Lowell, a niece of the Lowells—slim, girlish, slightly above medium height. Tucked in an armchair at the farther end of the table, she was reading a book on business efficiency, holding the volume in one hand and with the other dipping frequently into a box of chocolates. If Doctor Julia Judson Lowell's personality gave a note of force and dominance to the atmosphere of the apartment, her niece balanced it with an equally strong impression of grace and charm, while Miss Judson added mild sweetness—a touch, let us say, of old lavender. The somewhat testy note struck by Caleb Lowell did not count for much in the way of alloy. It was a negligible factor, as, indeed, he seemed to be, as he sat browsing over his paper.

Presently Doctor Lowell gathered her papers and arose.

"Eleanor, my dear—Matilda," she said, in a deep, pleasing voice, "I have finished that article on dress reform for the *Woman's Friend*. I want your opinion. I desire to be as delicate as possible"—she cleared her throat—"and yet it is not my intention to minimize any necessary detail through either euphemism or evasion. I wish you both to understand that I am not committed to the principle of dress reform—that I am merely discussing it pro and con in an academic manner."

The habit of reading her work aloud in the family circle was one of the woman's few failings; at least her husband regarded it as such, while, on the other hand, her sister and Eleanor were always flattered and were, as a matter of fact, valuable critics. And be sure the worthy doctor read solely for criticism; she heard her own voice too much in public to be at all desirous of having it heard professionally, as it were, within the walls of her own

home. Eleanor laid down her book as a sign of attention and leaned forward slightly, while Miss Judson continued to ply her needles with a placidly expectant smile. Caleb Lowell sighed audibly and buried himself deeper in his chair.

"This," began Doctor Lowell, "is what I've written this afternoon. You will recall where I left off." She turned to the loose pages of manuscript in her hand and read: "'We have already found as a result of this war that woman is fully as capable of the performance of manual labor as man. What, then, remains? Why, nothing but a germ-bearing garment which man himself devised and foisted upon our sex—'"

"But, Aunt Julia," protested Eleanor, "some skirts are really most attractive."

"If you'll recall, Eleanor, what I said a moment ago, you will realize that I am discussing a theory and not advocating a principle. Now please listen and don't interrupt unless you have something really interesting to say." She again turned to her manuscript. "'While I am no advocate of men's clothes as at present designed, while, in fact, I realize the ridiculous figure that I, for instance, would present in—'"

At this juncture, her husband, deep in his paper, gave vent to a sonorous and sarcastic chuckle. His wife regarded him indignantly for a second and then proceeded:

"'A ridiculous—' What would you put there?" she asked. "I have 'trousers.' I wish to strike a slightly humorous note, yet I don't want to be too funny."

"Why not 'male attire,'" suggested Eleanor.

"Yes," seconded Miss Judson, while the doctor nodded, murmuring that it was the very phrase. She hastily pen-

ciled the emendation and, resuming her former place, continued to read:

"I shall dwell upon the skirt, the long skirt particularly—"

The interruption came from the telephone on Doctor Lowell's desk. The bell was seldom silent for any length of time, for the doctor's affairs were manifold and complex. But this time she laid down the receiver with an expression of relief.

"It's for you, Eleanor," she said.

The girl disentangled her left foot, upon which, characteristically, she had been sitting, and went to the telephone, her nonchalance changing so markedly after a few words as to enlist the interest of those in the room.

"Robert Pinkham!" she cried.

"Eh?" Doctor Lowell turned from her paper and advanced to Eleanor's side. Caleb Lowell arose, also, staring at the girl. Miss Judson alone remained seated.

"No!" Eleanor was saying, her face burning. "I won't consider it for a moment! No! No, I wouldn't! I have other plans— Oh, I don't care a mite about the old trust deed! No, Robert, really I don't want— No, I positively won't! I—"

Doctor Lowell, whose patience had reached its limit, laid her hand upon the girl's shoulder.

"My child, you must control yourself. Now ask that person to hold the wire and explain to me at once."

"Hold the wire," said Eleanor obediently and then, placing her hand over the transmitter, she turned to her aunt.

"Aunt Julia, it's perfectly absurd!"

"What is? What is?" Caleb Lowell thrust his face toward her, his lips working nervously.

"Why," explained the girl in breathless accents, "Robert Pinkham, of all persons, has returned from France and wants to talk to me about fulfilling the terms of father's trust deed!"

"Indeed!" Doctor Lowell regarded the girl in amazement.

"Yes, and, Aunt Julia, he has the impudence to say that he insists upon seeing me and that if—er—that—"

"My daughter," Doctor Lowell interposed, "now that you've passed your twentieth year, I've been thinking rather seriously about that trust deed. If you recall, I've spoken to you several times. However your father may have secured his interest originally, he did, as I can personally testify, make every effort to atone in numerous deeds of anonymous generosity, not to say charity, to Jonathan and to members of his family. I have always regarded that mining interest as rightfully yours. Why not at least see Robert Pinkham?"

Caleb Lowell essayed to speak, but his wife frowned him into silence.

"Of course, Eleanor, this is merely my advice. You may, of course, do as you please."

"Thank you, Aunt Julia." Eleanor turned to the telephone. "You are very kind, Robert, but really it isn't of the slightest interest to me. Oh, yes, I understood what you meant—quite. No, you can't. I don't want ever to see you. No, no, no! Good-by."

Hanging up the receiver, the girl sat gazing at the telephone with widening eyes. Not altogether unused to the ways of many and various types of young men, she had no difficulty in defining this young Pinkham as of a sort not to be lightly encountered. He had that crisp, masterful sort of voice which, as she knew, was so potent with most girls. She had just terminated, in the interests of her ambition to be a woman of "big business," an affair that had threatened to become rather distracting, and she had no mind for further diversion. And yet again, she, too, had been thinking about that trust deed of late and felt a certain amount of inward resentment that it should fall to her uncle.

She glanced at him now and caught him in the act of studying her over the top of his newspaper. Doctor Lowell, in the meantime, had taken up her paper, prepared to resume reading, while Matilda Judson, mildly resenting the girl's unromantic attitude, had disposed herself to listen.

Eleanor rose from the table and wandered hither and thither about the room in a manner so annoying to the great woman that eventually she laid her paper aside.

"My dear," she said, "you must compose yourself. You have disposed of Robert Pinkham——"

Miss Judson glanced up, eager to express her thoughts.

"She wouldn't have done so, Julia, had it not been for the muddle of ideas and theories you've been stuffing into her and for which she is no more fitted than a cream puff is fitted to be a cannon ball."

Doctor Lowell stared.

"Matilda, how you run on! I think I grasp your idea of what a girl should be—a thoughtless——"

There was an upheaval from Caleb Lowell's chair, a burst of satiric laughter.

"Ha, ha! Votes for women! Abolish the home! Electrocute every wife that stays in the house long enough to become a mother! Down with men! Lynch them! Cut off their heads!" He strode out of the room waving his hands, while his wife looked after him as if half tempted to follow.

"Did you ever see such antics?" she asked, facing her sister. She returned to the case of Eleanor. "Don't misunderstand me, Matilda. I haven't the slightest intention of interfering with any plans that Eleanor may make for the future. I wish merely to be sure that she is properly equipped to meet it intelligently."

"She may develop into a good house-keeper if you let her alone," was Miss

Judson's comment. "Julia, you're accounted everywhere a great woman, and so you are, but sometimes I wish your acquaintance with household gods was as extensive as some of your other attainments."

The doctor regarded her severely.

"What's the matter with my house?" Then, seeing gathering tears in her sister's eyes, she stopped abruptly. "Now if you'll be so good, I'll endeavor to finish this paper——"

But again came interruption, this time in the person of a maid.

"Mr. Robert Pinkham to see you, Miss Eleanor."

"Oh!" Eleanor stood tense, quivering, the blood flooding her face. "Minna, tell him I won't see him! I won't! I won't! I——"

"Eleanor——"

"Aunt Julia, I won't! I beg pardon, but I——"

The excited outburst died upon her lips as Robert Trent—or, as we may say, Robert Pinkham—stepped briskly into the room.

CHAPTER III.

Never in her life had Eleanor Lowell been so utterly set at naught as now. Trent's audacity, his impudence, his brazen assumption, were sufficiently impressive, but Trent himself smote her with disintegrating force. She had always imagined her childhood's playmate as having developed into a loutish, commonplace sort of chap—which was, indeed, the case—but here was a handsome, broad-shouldered young man with a clean-cut, square face, whose every word and gesture betokened *savoir-faire*.

Parenthetically it might be said that Trent's *savoir-faire* was being maintained at the expense of every ounce of his will power, if only for the reason that the girl he saw before him quite filled him with the impression that at

last, after all his searching, he stood in the presence of his ideal.

As the girl, quivering with conflicting emotions, watched him turning with graceful suavity from Doctor Lowell to Miss Judson, she felt the sway of his personality, while at the same time she longed to stamp her foot and scream. How had he ever dared? But he was facing her again, his eyes glowing with admiration.

"Eleanor, I'm deucedly sorry! But, after all, I'm doing this for you, you know. That's why I returned from France. I didn't want to come. I'm needed there. But this was a matter of right—your right, Eleanor." Then, by way of extra flourish, he sighed, turning to Doctor Lowell. "You've no idea how lonely a fellow is in a great city, especially when he doesn't know any one." A note of pathos had crept into his voice.

The good doctor, herself somewhat swept off her feet by Trent's unexpected appearance, smiled grimly and pointed to a chair.

"Sit down, Robert, do."

In his preliminary calculations as to the character of this woman Trent had decided that she was of the comic-weekly type of strong-minded woman, the only type with which he had ever been familiar, and he had planned his campaign accordingly. But now, as he essayed to continue his light discourse, still standing at ease in the middle of the room, he met Doctor Lowell's wonderful, indomitable eyes. He sought the designated chair without further words, and with an uncomfortable feeling that whereas he had thought to enter a dovecote, he had ventured lightly into an eagle's nest. Yet those keen gray eyes were not without suggestions of humor, while the finely shaped face showed kindness as well as strength and intensity of purpose.

"Robert," she said, "your sense of justice is to be commended. I admire

it. Yet, of course, the matter is one for Eleanor to decide. In a moment we shall leave you to discuss it." She turned suddenly upon the girl. "Did you mutter, my dear?"

Eleanor glanced up with malice in her eyes.

"I was saying that I have nothing to discuss. I wish he would go."

Trent, now that Doctor Lowell's attention had been diverted, regained composure. He smiled upon Eleanor in a superior way.

"I can understand Eleanor's point of view," he said, "but I feel that if I am willing to undertake this for her sake, she should be willing to do her part."

"I don't care to do my part!" flared Eleanor. "And I don't want you to do yours!"

"There, there! Tut, tut!" The woman regarded her approvingly. "You've been in France, you say?"

"With the Y. M. C. A. I'd be a soldier now, but a shell knocked me out while I was driving in the American Field Ambulance." Trent held up his maimed hand.

"Oh!" Eleanor stepped forward impulsively. "So you were wounded, Robert? Oh, you must tell—" She paused abruptly, biting her lip.

Doctor Lowell suppressed a smile.

"But what will you do in this city, assuming that you and Eleanor agree to this—this—"

"I've been promised a position in Wall Street, and I have an income," explained Trent, breaking in eagerly. "What I want to do, Doctor Lowell, is to see Eleanor as frequently as possible, with the idea, of course, that if we learn to—care for each other, we'll become engaged and then married on her twenty-first birthday. Of course," he added, "I realize that we may not like each other at all as we get to know each other."

"I don't like you now!" exclaimed the girl, but there was a note of dubiety

in her voice that Trent and Doctor Lowell caught.

"Well, as I say, my sister and I will give you an opportunity to discuss this together." She seated herself in a chair near Trent, regarding him with interest. "I should never have known you. But then, of course, I haven't seen you since you were a child. I wonder if you favor your mother. No." She shook her head. "Nor your father. By the way, Robert, how is your mother?"

"Mother!" Trent started. "Oh—yes. She's very well—very well indeed."

"I haven't seen Mollie Pinkham—or, as I should say, Mollie Oliphant," she pursued, "in a great many years. I suppose she's changed a great deal."

Trent shook his head doubtfully.

"Well, I don't know. Most people say she carries her age remarkably well. That is," he added, "of course she's by no means an old woman yet—"

Doctor Lowell smiled.

"Not unless you call me one. As a matter of fact, we're just the same age."

"I've heard mother remark that."

"You have?" Doctor Lowell studied him in some surprise.

Trent nodded undauntedly.

"Oh, yes, she's often spoken of you. In fact, she admires you, I think, more than any person in this country. You know we're all keen for suffrage out our way."

Doctor Lowell was regarding him with interest now.

"So your mother admires me, you say? That seems rather curious. You see, I haven't seen or heard of Mollie Pinkham—I should say, Oliphant—in sixteen or seventeen years. Naturally you understand all about that, though."

Trent glanced at Eleanor, but she stood idly turning over the pages of a magazine. Miss Judson had stopped

knitting, listening with interest to the conversation.

"You know all about that absurd misunderstanding, of course," repeated Doctor Lowell.

"Oh, yes, about that mine—of course—and the—ah—marriage," murmured Trent, breathing a prayer that she would be content with this.

It was with a sinking sensation that he saw she was far from being so. On the contrary, now that she had centered her thoughts upon that contretemps of bygone years which had served so completely to estrange and alienate the Lowells and the Pinkhams, she was of a mind to canvass the matter more or less thoroughly. Her compressed lips and generally stern mien indubitably suggested such intention to Trent's startled mind. Her first words confirmed his fears.

"Naturally," she began, "you sympathize with your mother in this unfortunate affair—"

Trent shifted in his chair, seeking a reply that would not irritate, even if it would not entirely satisfy, his inquisitor. At length he shrugged, his manner and voice indicating that he was not greatly interested either way.

"Well, not altogether," he said.

"Not sympathize with your mother!" The doctor viewed him with some surprise. "That is rather interesting."

This time a reply was promptly forthcoming.

"Well," he explained, "I believe there are two viewpoints. I have always believed that. My stepfather was always kind to me. That is what counts."

"To be sure," was Doctor Lowell's comment. She nodded approvingly. "But what would you have done if you had been in our place?"

"Why, that would depend," he spattered.

"Oh, I'm not dealing with this specific case," she interrupted. "I'm speaking generally. What?"

"I don't think I could answer that offhand." Trent's reply was ponderous, as if he had seriously considered her question and found it beyond him.

"You mean," she continued, "that you have some natural delicacy—what?"

"Yes, yes, of course," returned Trent gratefully.

Miss Judson leaned forward.

"I am Miss Judson, Doctor Lowell's sister." As Trent bowed, she went on. "You say your mother admires my sister? Does she speak much of us? Mollie Oliphant, my sister, and I were very friendly, years ago."

Trent paused and then took the plunge.

"Why, yes—that is—no. I don't think I ever heard my parents speak of either of you personally. She admires Doctor Lowell as a notor—I mean a public character—who—who—has done so much for women. Yes, that is precisely the way she admires her. There never has been anything—anything personal, you know—nothing about those old days. Why, you've no idea how little I've ever been told about them."

"I suppose not," grumbled Doctor Lowell. "That is generally the way with people who are in the wrong. They persist."

Trent nodded.

"Yes—they do," he murmured somberly. "But now I'm trying to do my part to make everything right."

"Well"—Doctor Lowell arose—"as it appears, Robert, you are of a mind to carry out the terms of my brother-in-law's ridiculous trust deed—to the letter. Eleanor may do as she pleases, of course. At all events, I trust that if this affair has no other result, it will at least tend to terminate this unfortunate misunderstanding between the two families." She nodded to her sister. "Matilda, come." Proceeding toward the door with her sister, she paused and looked back at Trent. "My idea is,"

she explained, "to give you two a chance to determine upon your future course."

As the two disappeared, Eleanor turned to Trent a baleful face.

"I think you're perfectly despicable!" she said. "I told you as clearly as possible that you must not come." Her voice rose with indignation. "I told you that you mustn't come at all. And now—now you walk in as breezily as though—as—I hate you!"

Trent rose slowly from his chair.

"I'm sorry you feel that way," he replied humbly. "You were so stuffy when I called up that I was quite willing to quit. But then, when I thought it over, I felt I was neglecting my duty. You need my assistance in this matter. Ah, you know you do," as she shook her head. "I didn't want to annoy you, and if you really think that—really think—"

"Really think? Oh, I can't think! Uncle Caleb can have his old stocks!"

"He can't have them," interrupted Trent with fiery intensity, and then, quite naturally and easily, he allowed his genuine suspicion of Caleb Lowell to carry him further upon his romantic career of untruth. "As a matter of fact," he said mysteriously, "I've discovered something wrong with your uncle's transactions that requires careful investigation. Oh," as Eleanor gazed at him, all eagerness, "nothing tangible yet—just hints. Wait. That's all. Rely on me. If what I suspect turns out to be true, you won't have to worry about Caleb Lowell's getting that interest, even if you don't marry me."

Trent looked around sternly, as if seeking instant encounter with the suspected person, while in reality hoping that he was a thousand miles away.

"He's in his study, I think," said Eleanor. Her face had gradually cleared as Trent talked, and now she was smiling radiantly. "After all, perhaps you are right." Her voice sank to

a whisper. "Do you know I've rather suspected him, even if he is my uncle? I wonder—" She regarded him glowingly. "Would you really mind looking into this thing, Robert?"

She was so utterly charming as she spoke, standing before him with her flushed dark face, the light glowing upon her neck and arms and shoulders, that he advanced impulsively toward her and then, being a young man of some experience with the other sex, checked himself easily and stepped straight past her to the table, where he picked up a book, giving the suggestion that it was this dry tome and not the girl that had impelled him forward.

"There needn't be anything silly about our relations at all," she continued. "We'll simply consider that you are investigating Uncle Caleb's transactions, as you call them. There are to be no more unexpected visits."

"I shall come as often as seems necessary to dig into this trust matter." He spoke sternly.

She walked deliberately to a chair and, settling down comfortably, picked up her book.

"Very well, Robert. Since it concerns my uncle, there's no reason why I should object." She glanced up at him as he stood gazing at her darkly. "He's in his study now."

"But," he protested, "I came to-night—"

"Against my wishes," she interrupted calmly.

He gestured with dignified resignation and paced thoughtfully up and down the room, while she returned to her book, making some shift to read, whether successfully or not the reader may judge.

"Look here, Eleanor," he remonstrated at last, "this isn't quite fair. It seems only right we should get to know each other. I—don't know, but I think I could grow to—to—"

Again she interrupted.

"Robert, I don't want to be unkind, or to appear ungrateful, but you must see that I don't want you to grow—well, to grow. I'm never going to marry. I haven't the slightest ambition that way." Her face brightened. "You see, what I really wish to do—and you might as well know it now—is to start a chain of tea rooms—awfully attractive and inviting. There'll be two or three in this city—in the shopping district—and one in Brooklyn, and then, as they succeed, I'll stretch out the chain to Chicago, Denver, Boston—oh, everywhere." She paused, looking at him enthusiastically. "Miss Lowell's Tea and Toast Tavern! Don't you think it's a splendid idea?"

He agreed with her, not with enthusiasm, however.

"They'll have to be out of the ordinary, of course. There are so many already—"

"Of course," she interrupted, not liking his judicial tone. She already had had enough in the way of constructive criticism at home. "Now you can see why I absolutely refused to think of being married—to any one."

"Well"—Trent shrugged—"you'll do, of course, as you see fit, Eleanor. I want to say, though, that I'm anxious to help you in any way I can. And if I should happen to succumb to your charms—"

"Robert!" she cried. "If you talk that way—"

What more she would have said—and apparently she was minded to speak at some length—was prevented by the appearance of Caleb Lowell in the doorway. He stood there in his smoking jacket, his long, thin neck thrust forward, his sparsely covered crown glittering, a sardonic expression playing about his bristling features, suggesting nothing so much as some bird of prey.

"You," he said, pointing at Trent, "may I see you in my study a moment?"

Trent turned to him with a pleasant smile that was altogether spurious.

"Certainly, sir."

Lowell thereupon jerked his head in the direction of the hallway and led Trent to the little green-shaded apartment where he was wont to smoke and devise those vast financial schemes whereby he occasionally gained as much as several hundred dollars and occasionally lost that much. His manner, as he gently closed the door and pushed a chair toward Trent, had become so genial that his guest stood in the middle of the floor regarding him with open bewilderment; whereat Lowell let himself easily into a chair by the table and chuckled.

"Do have a chair, Robert Trent," he said.

CHAPTER IV.

Watching the stunned face of the young man before him, Lowell laughed immoderately, his multiangular body writhing back and forth in the chair. At length he sat up, darting his head forward.

"Well—well," he raucously chortled, "and how are you enjoying your little wheeze? What? Eh?"

"Oh—oh, extremely well, thank you." Trent, not knowing what to say further, not at all satisfied with what he had said, scowled and took out his cigarette case from his pocket.

"Do have a cigar," urged Lowell, taking up a box from the table and setting it down again as Trent shook his head and lighted his cigarette. "Anyway, sit down. I want to talk to you a moment, my boy."

Trent, not knowing what else to do, dropped languidly into a chair, threw his head back with a desperate assumption of his former impudence, and blew a cloud of smoke at the ceiling.

"Shoot," he said.

Lowell carefully shook the ashes

from his cigar and settled back in his chair.

"Trent," he opened, "there's no use beating about the bush."

"No," agreed Trent.

"Quite so. Now immediately my wife told me of the visit of this alleged Robert Pinkham, I said nothing—but I smelled a rat. As it chances, I have reason to know that young Pinkham returned to this country two weeks ago, and after a visit to his home in Colorado, came to this city day before yesterday and married a Red Cross nurse at the Little Church Around the Corner. They've both sailed for France on the *Rochambeau*. When I came into the library to throw out an impostor, I recognized you at once. I'm a Wall Street man myself." He paused, wrinkling his brows in a simian grimace. "And there you are."

A reply that had a somewhat familiar ring occurred to Trent, and it seemed to him as good as anything he could say: "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

Lowell leaned forward and struck the palms of his hands together.

"That brings us precisely to the point," he returned. "I assume you will admit there is nothing in the way of my taking advantage of the marriage of the real Robert Pinkham?"

"Nothing that I can think of—except my personal wishes." Trent was watching the man eagerly, it being apparent that for some reason or other he was in no hurry to proclaim the news.

"Exactly." Lowell's smile was of the friendliest sort now. "Perhaps you might be willing to give a reason for your personal wishes."

Trent replied with apparent frankness.

"Well, Lowell, I'll tell you. I saw your niece some time ago at a Red Cross tea and have been crazy to meet her——"

Lowell interrupted.

"Look here, Trent, play straight. You were snooping into that mine affair, and you seem to have delved into it sufficiently, as well as into affairs of the Pinkham and Lowell family, to bluff my wife and my niece. Yes or no."

"I'll tell you," replied Trent. "My firm has a client who holds some minor interest in the old Western Colorado Fuel Company. He has an offer for it, and he wanted us to determine why there should be a demand for that stock after all these years. He gave me the facts about the trust deed of Adrian Lowell's and other—other information. I could have hired detectives, as you know. But the fact is life has been so tame for me since I quit the French front that I undertook the adventure myself."

"And came a cropper," laughed Lowell, whose crafty, suspicious expression had gradually faded as Trent had proceeded. "Do you suppose your factor had any idea that the Consolidated Fuel Corporation was interested?" His eyes began to gleam.

"I don't know," Trent shrugged indifferently.

"I see." Lowell paced the room for a moment, his brows knitted in thought. "Well, I'm glad to have met you in any event. With your connections—ahem—connections, and so forth, we may be useful to each other down in the Street. So shall we leave it at that? Or do you wish to masquerade a bit longer?"

Trent, on the point of instant reply, compressed his lips, as admonitory instincts held their red flags before his mind. It was perfectly clear to him that this affair had been carried to its logical extremity. He had gone thus far in the pure spirit of adventure, and the results had quite exceeded all his expectations. He was, as he might have expressed it, quite thoroughly fed

up on thrills. Why, then, he failed to avail himself of Lowell's opening and extricate himself definitely, if ungracefully, from his predicament can be explained only on the ground of the extraordinary spell which Eleanor Lowell had asserted, a spell so novel, so compelling, as to uplift and exalt him, stirring him as he never had been stirred. Then, too, there was the conviction that when he had spoken to Eleanor of suspecting this man of fraud in relation to the trust deed, he had spoken words born of divination. And so, as Lowell watched him, he nodded decisively and thrust his hands into his pockets.

"I shouldn't mind if you permitted me to keep my disguise, Mr. Lowell," he said. "In fact, I'd be grateful—that is, provided you think it would be inadvisable for me to make my real identity known."

The man eyed him amusedly.

"What do *you* think?"

Bobbie Trent frowned.

"Well, to be frank, I'm afraid, after all that's happened, it might make me a bit unpopular just now."

"I quite agree with you," was Lowell's comment.

"Just the same," Trent bore on, "I can't drop out now. For, frankly, I should like to know Miss Lowell better. She's the—the—well, she's a corker."

Lowell's face became stern and his voice assumed a deep, parental tone.

"What is your idea, Trent? Is this some idle fancy—just a little heart-breaking flyer, to be ended when you begin to get my niece where you—"

"Lowell"—Trent's voice had a sharp bite in it—"chuck that, please, if you want to talk to me any longer!"

The older man glanced at him sharply and nodded, as if with satisfaction.

"All right," he said. "You want to carry this romance on—so much for your part. For mine, it means I am deprived, temporarily, of the use of my

brother's interest in the Western Colorado Fuel Company; for under the terms of that trust deed, I must give my niece written notification immediately my trusteeship ends and I assume possession of the stocks. Not that they are valuable now," he continued, "but they might be. Suppose the Consolidated Fuel should decide to work the property. I don't believe the coal is all out of it, even if Pinkham and my brother were talking of robbing the pillars. Their engineer was a crook, and I've always believed he was in the employ of the Consolidated—the trust."

"Well?" Trent lifted his eyebrows.

"Well, the time is coming when the Consolidated will want that other half interest. Oh, I know what I'm talking about," as Trent smiled slightly.

The young man darted a glance at him.

"What do you know? Have you been dickering with them?"

"If I had, I fail to see what concern it would be of yours. But the fact is I haven't. I know a trick worth two of that. Let them hunt me up, if they want the stock."

"I see." Trent gazed at him speculatively.

"Well—well?" cried Lowell impatiently. "It's your deal."

"I haven't a card," replied Trent.

"Maybe I can give you one," was the prompt rejoinder. "In the first place, say the Consolidated Fuel wants my interest."

"If they do, it's up to you to pull them along, as you intimate," sneered Trent. "So it's to your interest, not mine, that you keep your discovery of me to yourself."

"There's something in that," Lowell smilingly agreed, "but not everything. For, you see, I could have announced young Pinkham's wedding and still held the chance of dickering with—"

"Oh, all right, all right," interrupted

Trent testily. "Then what is it you wish?"

"Ah—now we come to the point. Lowell arose and walked up and down the floor a moment. Presently he paused in front of Trent.

"Your father, Horatio Trent," he intimated, speaking slowly, "is back of that Raritan pool and is largely interested in the Middle Atlantic movement, as well as several other things that I follow." He leaned forward eagerly. "Now, I've been devilishly unlucky lately—have been pinched a couple of times—and—a word occasionally from you to me—just a bit of a word—eh?"

Trent arose swiftly.

"Drop that, Lowell!" he commanded, at which the other laughed disapprovingly.

"Of course; just as you say, Trent. It's up to you. But Eleanor—I must say I rather admire your taste. Come now—is it a bargain? Just a word once in a while? I know how to keep secrets." As Trent's face relaxed, Lowell walked up to him and slapped him gently on the back. "Don't be an ass, Trent. Use your head."

"Well—" Trent paused, weighing his words. "As you may imagine, my father does not take me into his confidence to any extent—"

"No! Ha! Ha!" Lowell's eyes had an ophidian glitter.

"But I shouldn't be a bull on Middle Atlantic in the next two weeks—and I shouldn't be a bear on Raritan."

"Ha!" Lowell reached for Trent's hand and shook it. "Excellent! Very good indeed! Now that we understand each other, we'll go ahead and make hay while the sun shines. You should have confided in me before this." He moved to the door and opened it. "We can be of mutual benefit to each other, my boy. For, as I said, we're both practical men. Well"—he nodded toward the hall—"you'll have nothing to fear from me."

Trent, who had had quite enough of the house of Lowell for one evening, walked back to the library to say good night to Eleanor. He strode into the apartment with a light, confident step, filled with the idea of letting Eleanor see that he was no more anxious to stay than she was to have him, but stopped short, blinking seriously, as he crossed the sill.

Doctor Lowell and her sister were standing by the table, animatedly discussing an unopened letter which Miss Judson held in her hand, while Eleanor hovered about in the background.

"Ah, Robert!" Doctor Lowell nodded at him. "So you are here. We have a letter here, apparently from your mother—"

"Your mother, Robert, unquestionably," chimed in her sister, seeing Trent's blank expression.

"My mother!" Trent's recent interview with Lowell had left him practically without ability to dissemble.

"Yes, Robert, your mother," sniffed—or, since the act of sniffing implies a small nature, let us say, rather, snorted—Doctor Lowell. "One would fancy you did not believe her capable of writing."

Here Trent's wits, which had been dallying elusively just beyond his grasp, rallied to his assistance. He smiled with an injured air.

"Capable of writing, yes, Doctor Lowell—but— Oh, yes, the letter is addressed to me in your care."

"Not at all. It is for me," asserted the doctor, seizing the envelope which her sister held toward her.

"For you! From my mother! That is strange!" Trent smiled. "Of course you understand why."

"It is most curious," grumbled Doctor Lowell. She ripped the letter open with a vigorous movement. "Let's see." She cleared her throat and glanced at the missive. Then read it aloud:

"DEAR JULIA: This is merely to supplement the personal message I sent you through Robert, who, of course, you have seen by this time. I am really sincere, and I wish you to believe that what he has told you is the result—"

Here Doctor Lowell's eyes became sternly fixed, as if the written words were seeking escape from the page, and her voice rang with cumulative intensity.

"—is the result of long and prayerful meditation on my part. I pray you will write me and tell me that, after all these bitter years, all is as it was before. I trust you will take this in the spirit in which it is written, Julia. I have thought long about it. We are all older, and I seem almost to have forgotten the nature of our disagreement. Can we not forget all about it and be friends again? Affectionately yours,

"MOLLIE HALSTEAD OLIPHANT."

Miss Judson lifted her head with a face turned beatifically to her sister.

"How noble!" she cried. "How sweet!"

But she was waved aside, her transports stilled, by the clouds settling upon the great woman's face.

"Robert," she said, facing Trent, who, throughout, had been standing before her frightened and yet exhilarated as he always was in ticklish situations, "you didn't say you had seen your mother recently. Why did you not give me her message?"

Unseen tremors were passing through the harried young man, but his smile, at whatever enormous cost of self-control, was serene.

"I—I didn't think the time—was ripe, Doctor Lowell. My mother told me first to—to soften you in her behalf—to soften you, and then—yes—and then to give her message later." He took out his handkerchief and mopped his face. "You, of course, can see the wisdom of that."

Doctor Lowell nodded, not with any idea of affirmation, however.

"I see," was her cold comment. "She wished you to *soften* me. May I com-

pliment you upon the masterly way in which you have undertaken this delicate task? Now, then, Robert—what was her message?"

Trent's very desperation made him brave.

"But, Doctor Lowell," he protested, "you must admit the time is not ripe. No, it isn't really. You are still bitter against my mother—or aren't you? Honestly, it's a delicate situation. Perhaps I haven't handled it correctly—but I did the best I could. We mustn't spoil things by haste."

Doctor Lowell looked dazedly from Trent to her sister, to Eleanor, and then back to Trent.

"Robert, are you crazy?" she exclaimed at last.

"Crazy!" Trent turned toward Miss Judson with a slight lifting of the brows, as if to intimate that he and she understood, if Doctor Lowell did not. But that good woman did not alter the expression of perplexity that rested upon her mild features.

"Come, Robert," she urged.

"But," persisted the hapless young man, "this is a matter that vitally affects mother's happiness. Everything—er—depends upon the success of this re-reconciliation—upon its completeness, that is."

Doctor Lowell had impaled him with her most penetrating stare.

"Robert, I am waiting." She spoke with a rising inflection; whereupon Trent, raising his hands in a gesture of resignation, spoke sullenly.

"She said—" He paused. "She said—"

"Yes, I have no doubt 'she said,' but what did she say?" rumbled his inquisitor.

"She said—"

"Robert, if you'll please be so good, don't say 'she said' again. It wears."

Trent gulped and began afresh.

"I want you to pardon me, but this is hardly the way I had intended

broaching this matter. My mother said—wanted me to say to you—that she had long ago forgotten the disagreeable—unpleasant incident between the two families; that, as she looked back, she could see where you had reason for thinking as you did—that is, that there were two sides—as there are in everything; and that she wondered if you could not find it in your heart to have everything as it was before."

"Was that all?" inquired Miss Judson.

"Yes, about all," replied Trent, beginning to smile now.

Doctor Lowell nodded and then relapsed into thought.

"Well," she said finally, "I'm sure I bear no enmity. Mollie Oliphant was a foolish and impulsive woman. Apparently she realizes it. I shall be very happy to enter into communication with her again."

"Oh—bully!" Trent beamed beatifically.

"Very well. I suppose you will write."

"I shall telegraph," Trent said quickly. "You've no idea how happy she will be." His voice took on a subdued tone. "She has seemed to age rapidly in the past two years, and this—your kindness will do a lot for her." He moved toward the door. "Well, I must be going. Eleanor"—he looked toward the girl, who was settling down in her chair, quite oblivious, apparently—"won't you walk to the door with me? I want to speak to you."

She sighed heavily and hesitated, then arose and left the room with him, walking down the hall at his side. There was just the faintest suggestion of some delicate perfume about her, and her whole personality thrilled him as he had never been thrilled before by a woman. Harrowed mentally as he had been, his thoughts still whirling and sparkling in uncertain ecstasy, his mind, under the stimulation of her pres-

ence, reacted automatically to her charm. With his hand on the door-knob, he turned to her.

"Eleanor," he said, "I don't want you to look down upon me as you seem to." He was very good to look at as he stood before her, his well-built figure inclined slightly forward with easy grace, his fine eyes bright with intensity, his cleanly modeled features set with serious emotions. "Can't we be—at least friends?"

She would not have been the girl she was had she not been softened to some degree. She put her hands out half consciously.

"I hope we can be—friends, Robert," she replied. "That will depend upon you."

He touched her hand softly.

"You mean?"

"Oh, you know what I mean." She shrugged. "There is to be no—nothing silly or—well, romantic."

"Romantic?" Trent smiled banteringly. "Eleanor, do you know what girls called me in Denver? The marble monster."

She laughed outright.

"The marble monster?"

He joined in her mirth, then grew serious.

"Well, you know what I mean. Romance and all that sort of thing bore me to death. When I go to a play of the sort, I go to sleep; when I read a sickish novel, I throw it away; and when some one sings a mushy song—" Trent looked unutterable menace.

She was still laughing.

"Then we understand each other. Good night, Robert." There was a pleasing cadence in her voice.

Trent looked up quickly, and something he caught in her face as his eyes met and held hers—something indefinable and yet all the more speaking because it was unconscious—sent fire through his veins.

"Good night, Eleanor. I'll see you soon again. In the meantime, if you have anything—anything you might want, you can telephone—or write—me at the Cavaliers' Club."

"Oh, I'm sure I shan't—"

"Well, you might," interrupted Trent. "Good night, Eleanor."

He stood on the steps a moment after the door had closed; then, leaning over the side of the iron railing which bounded the front windows, he saw her pass into the library, with her fine, lithe swing, her—gleaming arms and shoulders, her wonderful dark hair.

On the sidewalk, he paused to light a cigarette and stood puffing it contemplatively.

CHAPTER V.

Trent breathed the frosty night air in deep breaths; he gazed at the lights that flooded forth from the windows of the clubs across the square. There was something unreal about them; it was as if he had never seen them before. The night itself was filled with things he had never hitherto felt—hidden voices, perhaps, singing in subtle harmony, and to the eastward the luminous glow that filled the night sky seemed the fulguration of his own thoughts. He shrugged and struck at the pavement with his stick.

Somehow the memory of a soldier falling at his feet in France, with the subdued, wondering remark: "I've got it, mate!" came to him.

He felt just that way. And yet what a soft, thrilling, warming, beneficent wound! His thoughts turned to the girl. He liked the poise of her head and the little curl of dark hair in back at her neck. She had so many little mannerisms of which he had approved—a sudden widening of the eyes which had occurred when he had mentioned his wound, and then a delicious little shrug of her shoulders—

"By George!" he murmured. "Have I got it?"

If so, this act of folly, an act in the original instance born of an overweening desire for the unusual things of life, as well as the ambition to perform a bold stroke that would impress his father, was like to cost him his liberty.

He turned suddenly and strode up the street.

"Rats!" he cried, laughing. "It'll all die out by morning."

But it didn't die out. When Trent arose at an unusually early hour, having spent the night at his club, the Cavaliers, his first thought was the stupidity of a day without the prospect of seeing Eleanor Lowell at the end of it. He breakfasted perfunctorily, and after leaving his assumed name with the clerk, merely as a matter of precaution against messages or letters—later, he was to congratulate himself upon his foresight—he left the club and upon the sidewalk paused, somewhat struck by the peculiar light effect. A glance at his watch explained it all. It was barely half after seven o'clock.

Trent hadn't seen that hour of the morning since he had arrived from France. But it was fine and brisk to be abroad. Besides, it would give him opportunity to walk downtown to his office. He swung forth at a lusty pace, but eventually slowed down, and at length, with hardly a fight, diverted his course to the eastward and found himself loitering behind one of the corners of the Gramercy Park fence, his eyes fastened upon the brownstone walls behind which *she* lived and had her being.

The curtains were down in two of the second-story windows; possibly that was her room. He pictured her sitting in front of her dressing table, those perfect arms and hands hovering over the heavy dark hair. As he stood thus, one of the curtains was briskly

raised, then the window; and as Trent, thrilled and eager, leaned forward, there appeared the vulturelike head and long neck of Caleb Lowell.

In his revulsion of feeling, Trent closed his eyes, to shut out that preposterous figure in its purple-and-yellow bath robe. In fact, he turned away altogether and bent his steps southward, thinking deeply—thinking about Caleb Lowell.

Here was an uncertain factor, a mine liable to explode at any time. And he couldn't bear the thought of any such untoward event—just couldn't bear it. Not now, at least. Perhaps a situation would arise in which he, and not Eleanor's uncle, would have the whip handle. He would have the man looked up in the Street. Fellows of his stripe usually have many masters; perhaps it would develop that Trent knew one or more of them extremely well. The thought cheered him a lot, and he went on his way at a brisker gait. He had already wired to a banking correspondent in Denver for further information concerning the Pinkham-Lowell feud, of which his father's lawyers had already given him some hint. This in hand, he would be more adequately armed against Eleanor's two aunts.

He recalled, not with relish, his grisly experience of the previous evening in the Lowell home. By Sunday, he believed, he would be loaded for bear, and perhaps he could do some shooting on his own hook. It was no fun to be the only target in the situation. When finally he emerged from his cogitations and looked up, he found himself within that cañon of stone and mortar where his office was. Later, he walked over to the Exchange, conversed indolently with his father's broker, and secured some underground information on Atlantic preferred, which he fancied would stave off Caleb Lowell—hang him!—for a while at least.

Nor was the staving-off process long

delayed. Trent had hardly returned from luncheon when Lowell's card came in to him. In a way, coming as he did from Eleanor, Trent was almost glad to see him. Nevertheless, the man's promptness in presuming, if the term may be used, upon the implied agreement with Trent, was a bit irritating. However, he had him in.

Lowell entered briskly, his head darting from side to side, his features distended in a smile, his hand outstretched.

"Hello, Lowell!" Trent arose and pointed to a chair. "Sit down."

Lowell chuckled. After all the years, affairs were beginning to look pretty bright for him. The ticker room was usually his place in the offices of reputable brokerage houses. Now he was right back with the firm, said firm, he thanked his lucky stars, being related by ties of good, filial blood with that stern and inscrutable magician, Horatio Trent.

"Only for a moment, Trent," he said. "Or"—he grimaced—"I suppose it must be 'Robert,' now. Ha! Ha! You dog! Well"—as Trent winced—"I won't rub it in. What's the news?"

"Nothing particular," Trent grumbled. "Middle Atlantic looks pretty good."

"Middle Atlantic!" Lowell leaned forward. "Why, it's down two points to-day, one and three-quarters yesterday."

Trent frowned and swung around to his desk.

"Just the same, it looks good to me," he repeated.

"Oh! Ah!" Lowell arose. "Thank you!" He reached for his hat. "Don't let me interrupt you," he added. "Just dropped in for a second." He nodded. "Middle Atlantic, eh?" He flashed out of the door.

When the market closed, Atlantic preferred had unexpectedly—to the great majority—regained the ground lost in the past few days, the result of

a flood of buying orders which set in shortly before two o'clock.

That night Caleb Lowell strutted and beamed about the library of his home with an air so mellifluously amiable, with so many chuckles, that his wife accused him of intoxication, which charge he amiably denied. Then he sidled out to his study, where he spent the evening constructing fabulous dreams with his day's winnings of a few hundred dollars as the foundation.

Trent, whose firm was not a speculative company, was interested in the movement only inasmuch as it seemed to dispose of Lowell for a period. This was gratifying. But it occupied only a minor share of his thoughts, which, as the afternoon waned, were largely devoted to ways and means of spending the evening without seeing Eleanor.

He wanted to see her, wanted to hear her voice. Yet he didn't want to offend her and, above all, he didn't want to alienate her at the outset by appearing overzealous. He would wait two days—until Sunday—before calling and then be as blasé as he knew he could be when he wished, and talk a lot in wise fashion to that Miss Judson and—well, not to Doctor Lowell; not if he could help it.

At the club, his man recalled to his mind a week-end shooting party in the Hempsteads, to which he and a favored few had been invited on Friday ahead of the rest. This would bridge the gap to Sunday evening.

Late Sunday afternoon, when he entered the Cavaliers, an attendant handed him several telephone blanks, containing a list of calls since he had left the club. He shuffled the sheets hastily, glancing carelessly at each name until, as he came to the last—a memorandum for "Robert Pinkham"—he let them all fall to the floor and, with an exclamation, hurried to the telephone desk.

"When did Doctor Lowell call?"

His appearance was so sudden, his manner so intense, that for a moment the operator stared at him dazedly.

"Well, what's the matter?" cried Trent sharply. "Doctor Lowell—when did she call?"

"About half an hour ago, sir," was the reply. "She asked for 'Mr. Pinkham' and—she seemed in a hurry. She asked when you would be in."

"Get her—quick!" Trent strode toward the booth, calling back over his shoulder that the number was under Caleb Lowell's name.

It seemed an age before that full, vibrant voice came over the wire:

"Robert Pinkham, is that you?"

"Yes." There was a quiver in Trent's voice.

"Robert," said the woman, "I have understood from my niece that you were to call to-night. I wish to say that Eleanor does not want you to call and that for various reasons I am quite inclined to respect her wishes—at least until such time as I shall have opportunity to go over this entire situation."

"Doctor Lowell"—Trent's voice broke in his indignation—"do you think that's fair to me?"

"I shall take that into consideration with other points, when, as I have said, I have the time."

"But," proceeded Trent, "I have come to like Eleanor a very great deal."

"I am sorry, very sorry, Robert, but you will have to wait."

"I—"

"Good-by, Robert." The receiver clicked.

Trent threw his receiver on its hook and stormed out of the booth.

CHAPTER VI.

Trent had realized that in the very nature of his relations with the Lowells disaster inevitably must lurk close at hand, and had held constantly in mind the necessity of complete rectifi-

cation of his status at the earliest possible moment, to the end that further association with Eleanor Lowell might be conducted on a basis more likely to endure. Despite this, however, the sudden collapse of present, not to say future, prospects, following the telephone conversation with Doctor Lowell, was well-nigh crushing.

He had no idea that Doctor Lowell, once she centered the power of her intellect upon this matter, would not fathom it to the utmost depths, exposing it in every particular—if, indeed, this had not already happened. It was all over; that was all. He struck the pavement with his stick, for reaction had come now—he was angry. He had acted like a twelve-year-old boy, and Eleanor had treated him as one throughout. Moreover, he had thrown down his father on a business matter.

Well, at all events, he was fundamentally a man. Trent was minded to prove this to his own satisfaction, at least. As for Eleanor Lowell—He shrugged. She was not the first girl whom he had found attractive, and, as with others of her sex, further acquaintance, no doubt, would have revealed one of those insurmountable flaws which in recent years had so unfailingly arisen to set the ultimate development of romance at naught. Admitting instinctive suggestions that this case was different, there was yet the saving fact that his instincts had not always served him with undeviating accuracy. In any case, she had revealed little if any interest in him; his personality hadn't made a dent. This being so, there was no reason why the chain of events relating to the Lowells should not have snapped to-day as well as a week later. Again, he began to note a pervading sense of relief that the strain was over. From now on, he could give his mind to more important matters than a silly game of trying to play two ends against the middle.

Thus dismissing the whole situation, he assumed a jaunty attitude and set out for the Harvard Club, where, around a congenial table in a well-known corner, he found Tommy Elwell and a group of kindred spirits.

"Your father was looking for you this morning, Bobbie." Elwell grimaced significantly. "I imagine he's wondering at the delay."

Trent dropped nonchalantly into a chair.

"Delay! Does he take me for a pneumatic tube? Well, all right, I'll see him to-night. What were you chaps talking about?"

His vivacious plunge into an argument which he had interrupted soon petered out; immediately following came the disturbing conviction that his friends were getting on his nerves. This was puzzling, because they were all good fellows, and the sort of talk and banter in which they were indulging was altogether familiar. One reserve officer from Yaphank, a classmate of whom he was very fond, was rubbing his nerves raw with sage observations on military matters in general and the situation on the western front in particular. So presently he ended a period of gloomy abstraction by rising and making his way out of the club.

What did Eleanor Lowell take him for, anyway? The fact that she had given little indication of having taken him for anything was beside the fact of his present mood. By George, hadn't he offered to investigate this old fool, Caleb Lowell, and set her straight on this trust-deed business? Any ordinary girl would at least have appreciated such kindness. Well, she would find that she had been dealing with a man. There was something brave and grim about this thought which provided a modicum of comfort. But it didn't last long.

And the while he had on his hands a

lost evening—which is about the most discomfiting thing a young man who relies upon outward diversion for his enjoyment can have. He sauntered up to the Cavaliers, but the club had settled down to its deadly week-end desuetude. One table in the dining room was occupied by a party of four of the older men who had been drinking Burgundy and growing more stupid with each succeeding glass. Two or three sat under the green lamps in the reading room, while in a corner lurked old Poppendyck, the club pest.

Trent fled.

"About as joyful as a crematory!" he grumbled.

Pausing by the telephone booth, he debated whether or not to call Eleanor on the telephone. The temptation to do this was strong; in fact, about the only thing he really wanted in the world, at the moment, was to hear her voice. He moved toward the booth, but had proceeded only a step or two when he brought himself up with a sharp jerk. He'd be hanged if he would talk to her!

Later, he walked uptown to his home, went to his room, and dressed. His mother had expressed mild surprise and some pleasure when he had telephoned his intention of dining at home, a function which, as may thus be surmised, was not one of his regular habits.

Trent utilized the hour before dinner in mulling over the report he was to make to his father, and determined to tell of the marriage of Robert Pinkham, thereby gaining for himself, among other things, credit at the expense of his father's shrewd attorneys, who had not only missed the fact of the wedding, but had failed to learn of Robert Pinkham's return from France.

His father, who greeted him grimly as he entered the dining room, was quite as interested in Trent's news as the young man could have hoped, add-

ing a few approving words concerning his son's acumen.

"So now," he said in conclusion, "we can set sail for Lowell. There's no great hurry. Since you've broken in so nicely, Robert, it would be as well for you to keep an eye on him and keep us advised, eh?" He eyed Trent sharply.

"Oh, nothing." Trent blinked. "I mean all right—certainly."

"Yes." Horatio Trent returned to his meal and in a moment or two looked up. "I'm glad, Robert, you're getting this thing in hand so nicely. I called on you in this matter for a starter, to see what stuff is in you and Elwell. There's such a thing as having too easy a time in life. Now, my father—"

His son arose eventually, walked around to his mother and kissed her lightly, and nodded to his father. As he went out, he fancied the two looked rather forlorn, sitting idly over their fruit and coffee, all alone in the middle of that big, elegant dining room. He vaguely wondered how it would have been with them had their lives been more closely knit, with common impulses, common ambitions and ideals, and congenial trends of thought. There didn't seem to be much in married life if this was the end of it, he thought. And so far as he had ever seen or known of the homes and the lives about him, this was the inevitable end.

It was a trend of cogitation that somehow did not lift him out of the gloom that had settled upon him before the dinner was half over. He wanted to see Eleanor Lowell—that was the short of it. There was the temptation to brave fate and make another descent upon the Lowell home—as he had done in the original instance. But the utter folly of any such expedient was not long in making itself evident. Well, at least he'd walk downtown to Gramercy Park—

He stopped abruptly on the sidewalk, calling himself names.

The processes that finally landed him at a card table at the Cavaliers were hardly clear to him. In fact, the most definite picture he had of himself came at about eleven o'clock, when he suddenly jumped up from the table, laboring under the impulse of a mighty idea.

When one's hand offended one, the biblical injunction was to cut it off. He could recall no instructions from that source covering one's whole being, but he was the fellow to invent one, just now. He would cut himself off—or, rather, cut himself out. That was what he would do. And the way to do this had flashed clearly across his mind. As the group about the table, who had been bearing with his silent grouch, as good friends can, looked at him inquiringly, he smote his hands together.

"Fellows," he said, "I've got to cut out of this! I've just remembered something important."

Before there was time for more than an unintelligible chorus of exclamations, he hurried to the clerk's desk, ordered a cab, and then went into the telephone booth, calling the number of his cousin's apartment.

Elwell, as it chanced, had just arrived, and it was his voice that came over the wire.

"Tommy," cried Trent, "don't drop dead. I'm going to sail for England to-morrow on the *Philadelphia*. Why, no reason except that I want to get into the heart of things in France. No, I don't know how, but I'll work it some way. Yes, she sails to-morrow. Father had the tip and let it out at dinner. Now keep mum about it, and I'll see you in the morning."

As it chanced, Trent had arranged to go abroad a fortnight previously on a banking matter and his passport had been arranged for. He had, therefore, no expectation of difficulty on this score.

He called up the home in New Jersey of one of the managers of the

American Line whom he knew personally, and received promise that the matter of accommodation would be attended to.

"And you'd better be aboard by three o'clock to-morrow afternoon," said the steamship man in conclusion. "Of course the government will tell us when to leave. But you'd better be aboard by that hour."

"Right-o."

Trent dashed out of the club and took the cab to his home. His mother had not yet come in, he learned, and the click of ivory balls told of his father's activities in the billiard room. Trent slipped by the door and entered his room, where he spent an hour packing a steamer trunk and then, dead fagged, went to bed, sleeping like a log. Arising early, he got rid of the trunk, left word with the butler that his mother might expect him to luncheon, and then went downtown, where, until nearly noon, various affairs so filled his mind that no thought of the girl who was driving him out of the country occurred.

When he realized this, he was immensely pleased with himself. It came in the way of eloquent testimony as to the wisdom of his determination. He would arrange to occupy himself some way on the other side; perhaps the British or French governments would show greater eagerness to avail themselves of his services than his own country had. And in good time, perhaps, dispatches would again tell of the distinguished services of Robert Trent, an American college athlete who—But hang it! Eleanor Lowell knew him as "Robert Pinkham."

Trent did not recover from the depression of this and concomitant thoughts until he met his mother at luncheon. She seemed less distract than usual, less absent-minded, and quite inclined to be personal and interesting. But as there were several of her friends

at table, her questions could not be too embarrassing and when he fled, as soon after the meal as he decently could, he found he had not been obliged to build upon the lie he had originally told concerning the ostensible motive for his journey, which, of course, was business. This made him feel better. He was tired of lying.

When he left port, he intended to leave every lie behind him, allowing each to die of its own weight, and never to tell another so long as he lived, whatever the emergency. Yet, curiously enough, strong as his intentions were, before leaving for the pier, he made it a point to inform the club telephone operator that under no circumstances must he fail, while the vessel was on the ocean, to forward by wireless, with the utmost promptness, any message of whatever sort that came to the club for "Robert Pinkham," whose whereabouts, by the way, were not to be divulged.

Elwell, who accompanied him to the pier, listened sympathetically while Trent, in a burst of mournful confidence, divulged the real reason for his departure.

"Tommy," he concluded, "the only thing to do was to beat it. You'll know how it is if you ever get hit the way I did. As for father, you'd better see him and tell him I'm going over on that munition affair. As a matter of fact, I shall look into it over there. Tell him Caleb Lowell won't do anything until Miss Lowell is of age, and that he'd better lay off him until that time."

"All right. Good luck, Bobbie."

Elwell, who was not permitted on the pier, shook hands with his cousin and was driven away.

Trent remained on deck until the liner had backed well out into the river and was having her nose pointed downstream by a fleet of tugs. Then he sauntered slowly to the wireless room,

where the operator was just entering the door.

"Have to go on duty so soon?" asked Trent casually.

"Yes," the young man said tersely, if politely. "People begin sending messages almost before we get off the Battery. Receive them, too. I'm in a bit of a hurry, sir." He stepped into the room, but not before Trent thrust his card into his hand.

"If anything comes for me, I wish you'd send it to my room steward just as quickly as you can, night or day."

"I certainly will, sir," replied the operator. The door closed and Trent was alone.

He went to the smoking room and sat for a while talking to an army officer. Eventually some one suggested bridge, and tables were being formed when the sudden stoppage of the engines brought all on deck. The vessel was under the Staten Island hills and here, in fact, she lay until after breakfast the next morning, when she resumed her course, driving out through the Narrows at a smart gait.

"Well, now we're off!"

Trent, leaning over the rail, watching the shore line slide by, sighed with relief. From now on, there would be no more unrest, no harried nights or intolerable days; no more doubts, perplexities, embarrassments, and lies—nothing. Eleanor Lowell, and everything connected with her, was sliding farther and farther astern at a rattling gait. There would be no worrying tonight whether or not he should see her; consequently there would be appetite for meals and sound sleep later. And to-morrow, when he arose, she would begin to blur a little upon the film of memory; just a little, and a little more the next day. He looked ahead. The great gray sea stretched before him, heaving and falling lazily. The breath of it came to his nostrils—not the smell of kelp and weed which landlubbers be-

lieve to be the smell of the deep, but that great, clean, fresh, buoyant blast that makes one wish to live and be and do—and thrilled him with its life. The operation had been a success; he was on the road to convalescence. He stretched out his legs and sighed.

As he did so, a white jacket flashed into the corner of his eye. It remained there, and, turning slightly, he found the room steward at his side. The man saluted and handed him an envelope.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said, "but this just came by the wireless."

"Oh!" So far had Trent got from the land, fast disappearing from sight, that for a moment he didn't quite grasp the situation. He did in another second, though. With a start, he sprang from his chair, seized the proffered envelope, and ripped it open. He read the following message with burning eyes:

Note, received by messenger, says: "Eleanor willing to see you and will do her part." Note signed, "Julia Judson Lowell."

CAVALIERS.

For an instant Trent stood rigid. Suddenly he started forward so unexpectedly that the steward jumped back.

"Steward," he cried, gripping the man by the shoulder, "I want to get ashore at once! This is important."

The steward looked at him blankly a moment. Then he shook his head.

"But you can't do it, sir," he said. "The boat is at sea, sir—"

"I don't care!" exclaimed Trent. "It's got to turn back!"

"Eh?" The steward looked at him incredulously.

"I tell you," said Trent, "I've got to get ashore! Didn't you understand me, man?"

Oh, yes, the steward understood him, and said so, but his manner left no doubt as to his conviction that this passenger had suddenly gone out of his mind.

As the two stood thus, gazing at each other, Trent turned and glanced over

the rail. The low white sands of Sandy Hook were glowing dully in the distance, and as he saw them, a great idea illumined his mind.

"Steward," he stuttered, "where do you drop your pilot? Has he left yet?"

The man fancied not.

"He usually goes off outside the Ambrose Lightship," he said. "I think, sir, as how the ship is beginning to slow down a bit now, sir."

But Trent had seized him by the arm, towing him forward at a rapid gait. Hastily running up the companionway, they got to the bridge deck, brushing past a sailor, and thence to the bridge companionway itself. Here they encountered a portly person in a blue overcoat and derby hat coming down the steps, talking back over his shoulder to a burly man in gold lace with a big, florid face and bristling whiskers.

"Hello, Captain Hildreth!" cried Trent, looking up and at the same time putting a detaining hand on the big shoulder of the pilot.

"Why, Mr. Trent!" exclaimed the skipper, coming down a step or two and waving his hand. "I didn't know you were aboard!"

"I'm not," said Trent. "That is," he explained, "I am, but I want to get off. I've just received an important message by wireless. I've got to get back if I have to swim."

The captain threw back his great head and gave forth a deep-sea guffaw.

"My word, Trent! Swim! You won't have to do that, my dear boy. Here's the pilot." He gestured to the man below. "Mr. Jenkins, will you put this young friend of mine ashore for me? He says it's important, and you may believe what he says." Before the pilot could answer, he nodded at

Trent. "You'll have to hurry. I've got the ship almost to a standstill now—and time is valuable."

The pilot was already walking toward the rail on the promenade deck, where a group of sailors had lowered a Jacob's ladder over the side, and the liner was sliding up to a whaleboat rising and falling on the waves a bit ahead. To Trent it seemed no larger than a bit of driftwood. He paused to shout up a word of thanks to Captain Hildreth, who was clambering back to the bridge, and then made his way to the deck below.

"You'll have to hurry," warned the pilot, as he clambered heavily over the rail. "They don't like to keep the ship waiting."

Trent waved his hand and glanced ahead, where, half a mile away, lay the white steam pilot boat.

"Right after you," he called cheerfully. He swung around on the steward, who had dogged him faithfully, and handed him a bill. "Bring my luggage back with you," he said. "Good-by."

He swung his leg over the rail and climbed cautiously down the flimsy ladder, rattling against the towering steel side of the vessel, and in a minute had dropped on all fours into the little boat.

When the sun set that evening, in vague, misty glory, and the brave *Philadelphia* was plunging her nose into the hidden reaches of the gathering gloom, Trent stepped wearily from a Staten Island ferryboat, hurried across to the subway station, entered a waiting train, and flung himself heavily into a seat.

"And some people," he muttered, gazing vacantly at the empty seats across the aisle, "say this is a dull section of the world!"



More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Duchess de Polignac:

The Throne Breaker.

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword—
But where are the snows of yesteryear?
—*Ballad of Dead Ladies.*

THE canoness, Diane de Polignac—rich member of a poor, but more or less ancient, family—sat smugly in the little suite that had been assigned to her at the Versailles Palace.

Diane was looking forward to a pleasant morning, for a poor relation was coming to call on her. Such visits were a delight to this rich member of the family. They gave her a chance to patronize her down-at-heel relatives, to receive their cringing adulation, to vent, if necessary, her frequent fits of nasty temper upon them with no fear of retaliation.

This sort of thing was not only a joy, but a safety valve as well, to the ugly Diane. Because, though she was tremendously important to her own family, she was of very little importance indeed in the court of Louis XVI of France. Indeed, her position there was much the same as that of her relatives toward herself. She was merely one of the least conspicuous ladies in waiting to the Comtesse d'Artois, sister-in-law of the king.

Diane, to-day, stood sorely in need of some one on whom to vent her crossness. Marie Antoinette, Queen of

France, had just ordained a royal fête, in which all the courtiers were to enact the rôles of *Merry Villager*, *Pretty Milkmaid*, and the like. The queen, in person, was organizing the silly affair; which meant that life was made a burden to every one in the palace. Already, Marie Antoinette had invaded Diane's suite half a dozen times that morning, in the most annoyingly informal fashion, to send the canoness on trivial errands, or to intrust her with unpleasant details for the fête. She had treated Diane, in fact, more like a waiting maid than a pompous lady in waiting.

Yes, it would be pleasant to have somebody to bully, to nag, to patronize.

And presently the poor relation arrived. She was Yolande Gabrielle Martine de Polastron de Polignac—beautiful young wife of Diane's dead-broke brother Jules, Comte de Polignac.

Yolande was of a family as old, and as poor, as her husband's. She had married at seventeen—she was now twenty-five—and, for the past eight years, she and her husband had been struggling pitifully to support the shoddy glories of an ancient name on an income of seventeen hundred and fifty dollars a year.

The shabby-genteel countess humbly greeted her lofty sister-in-law to-day, and listened in due meekness to the re-

cital of the latter's woes. This recital was cut short before its climax by a thin and striking-looking woman, who swept into the room unannounced, and demanded of Diane—who hastily scrambled to her feet to receive the unbidden guest:

"Madame, perhaps you can tell me—no one else seems able to. Do milkmaids wear bodices of velvet or only of velveteen?"

"I am sure, your majesty," stammered Diane, curtseying with all the stately repose of a hen seeking to cross the road ahead of a motor car, "I am sure—I am quite sure they are glad to wear whichever your majesty is pleased to prefer them to wear."

"Pardon me, your majesty," interrupted Yolande, with no trace of embarrassment or of cringing, "but they do nothing of the sort. They are lucky, nowadays, if they can afford bodices of canvas."

Diane gasped at the hideous breach of etiquette made in addressing the queen without first being spoken to by her majesty—or, indeed, in venturing to address her at all. But Marie Antoinette, who had frowned impatiently at Diane's stuttered reply to her query, was gazing in pleased interest at the lovely etiquette smasher—was, indeed, favoring Yolande with a look for which many a court lady would blithely have sacrificed four molars.

Marie Antoinette, from babyhood to death, loathed and struggled in vain against the insincerely formal etiquette that fettered her every move. Herself flashily insincere, she revered sincerity in others, and almost never found it, though she was pathetically eager in its quest. Also, she welcomed any one who seemed to share her own dis-taste for etiquette's iron rules.

"Who are you?" she demanded, walking up to Yolande.

Diane tried to sandwich in a stilted introduction of her poor relation. The

queen scarce waited for her to finish the formal phrases before turning her back upon her and asking Yolande:

"Why have I never seen you at court?"

"For the same reason you have never seen milkmaids in velvet bodices," answered Yolande. "We can't afford it."

This answer clinched the first impression. At a time when the phrase, "We can't afford it," was as unknown in artificial court circles as was Billingsgate blasphemy, Yolande's retort struck the queen as delicious. Yolande had entered the palace, that morning, a poor relation. She left it, many hours later, the chosen friend and confidante of the Queen of France.

From the chrysalis, now emerged the butterfly. Yolande's beauty, heretofore held in leash by the stark needs of dressing down to seventeen hundred and fifty dollars a year, burst forth gloriously under court favor's magic wand.

The gay royal coterie promptly tumbled to its jeweled knees and worshiped her; not so much because she was the queen's favorite—though that, of course, had something to do with it—as because of her loveliness, her refreshing frankness, and her very great super-woman charm. This last quality even her enemies—for envy soon brought her plenty of them—admitted, while they cursed her roundly for it.

Yolande's love affairs piled up quickly. Comte de Polignac, her husband, was dull, brutish, indifferent. He regarded his wife as a gold mine. So long as the mine brought him wealth, court advancement, and social recognition, he gave no heed at all to the moral aspect of the question. His type was more common than otherwise in that circle of scintillant rottenness. Let us say as little about him as we can, shan't we?

Austin Dobson summarized the last flare of the old French monarchy in

two lines—more vividly than could I in fifty pages—when he spoke of:

A Versailles Eden of cosmetic Youth,
Wherein most things went naked—save the Truth.

Yolande created a diversion by letting the Truth go naked, too. I honestly don't believe she was any more sincere than the rest of them. It was an era of artificiality, in one form or another, and she chose to be artificial by seeming natural.

The monarchy was tottering to its fall. Yolande did her humble best—without at all intending to—toward hastening that fall; wherein she deserves as large a place in the history of dynastic tragedy as do the fall of Sedan and the Battle of Naseby. For example:

Marie Antoinette was staggering the treasury of France by her extravagances. The starving people snarled like slowly angering dogs at the taxes which these extravagances heaped upon them. The queen—as from a great distance—heard the snarling and paused in momentary dismay. A few sane advisers urged retrenchment. But Yolande had gained boundless influence over the fickle Marie Antoinette, and not only egged her on to wilder expenditures, but made such tremendous and ceaseless calls for money for her own hangers-on that the monarchy raced toward its doom at redoubled speed.

Palace gossip, carried by servants, as pestilence is carried by flies, brought these sorry facts to the man in the street. The people cursed Yolande and made her the chief target of their grievances. They registered eternal hatred against her.

As a part of her labored simplicity—a simplicity, by the way, which extended to her dress as well as to her speech—Yolande made a point of never asking from the queen a favor for herself. But she did what amounted to the same thing—she demanded enor-

mous sums and high offices for her myriad parasites.

She told the queen that her husband could not stand the financial pace set by the court, and that they must leave Versailles. Marie Antoinette quickly found for the husband the richly paid post of equerry to the queen. Before long, she had him created a "duke and peer of France." She learned—through Yolande's disarming candor—that the new Duke and Duchess de Polignac owed vast sums of money. Her majesty paid all their debts—out of the people's money—obtained the estate of Fenestrange for them—worth seventy thousand livres a year—and a few months later made De Polignac postmaster general at a salary of eighty thousand livres. Diane, Yolande's sister-in-law, never for a moment let the new duchess lose sight of the fact that it was through the canoness she had obtained her entrée at court. In fact, a whole pack of relatives were incessantly yapping at her heels for money morsels.

In spite of them all, she continued to find increasing favor with the queen and to add to the long list of her adorers the most famous names of the time. Even the aged Duke of Richelieu was not exempt. She quite turned the old diplomat's head and enslaved him.

One of her lovers, the Duc de Lévis, declared:

"Hers was the most heavenly face that eyes could behold. Her glance, her smiles, all her features were angelic."

Another of them says:

"Her magic was the beauty of her blue eyes. No portrait could adequately convey her charm."

Comte de Tilly, yet another of her lovers, vowed:

"Her beauty lay not so much in her physical attractions as in her naturalness."

Lauzun, Coigny, De Balivière, and scores of others laid their hearts at her

feet; even Baron de Benserval, whom she won away from the queen.

She seems to have cared little for any of her worshipers up to this point. They sought her, not she them, in every instance. Then came her one great passion. There is almost invariably one with all of our super-woman, you will notice.

Into the picture stepped Comte de Vaudreuil, son of a governor of Haiti, and a Creole. He was dark and strikingly handsome, though pock-marked; a master of literature and art; the best amateur actor in France; and quite irresistible to women. He had lost his money in a Haitian rebellion, and landed in France bankrupt and obliged to live by his wits. These same wits presently won him the favor of the Comte d'Artois—later Charles X, King of France—whose boon companion he became. He naturally gravitated straight toward Yolande, then in the flood tide of her popularity. They fell deeply in love with each other. Over Yolande the Haitian cast a spell from which she was never able to free herself, nor did she wish to. She gloried in her love for De Vaudreuil. Says Michelet:

"She was the humble slave of this Creole planter."

For him, she obtained a pension of thirty thousand livres and an estate. He was made grand falconer, and Governor of Lille. He was a close friend of the statesman, Calonne, and through Yolande, helped to make Calonne a minister of France; thereby shoving the doomed monarchy still farther toward the brink of ruin. In partnership, Calonne and De Vaudreuil incidentally bled the treasury to the extent of one million eight hundred thousand livres.

Up to the time of Yolande's infatuation for De Vaudreuil, she was—outwardly, at least—gentle, sweet, and devoid of malice, envy, or ambition, ex-

cept as her anxiety for her family whirled or pushed her along. Now, however, De Vaudreuil became her evil genius. Her forced rapacity had much to do with the popular hatred that finally brought Marie Antoinette to the guillotine.

The queen's envious satellites tried to break up her friendship for Yolande. At the first breath of this, the duchess ordered her carriage.

"We do not love one another enough, yet, to be unhappy if we separate," she said to her majesty in explanation. "I feel that it has come to this already. Be warned. Let me leave you before it is too late. Soon, I should not be able to bear quitting you."

Marie Antoinette threw her arms around Yolande's neck, and, in the presence of the court, wept unrestrainedly, imploring her dear friend to stay. Finally she got down on her knees to the duchess. With De Vaudreuil at her elbow, it goes without saying that Yolande stayed—as she had undoubtedly meant to do from the first.

Then set in a still worse phase for everybody. De Vaudreuil set about systematically to fleece the queen. The Austrian ambassador courteously referred to the Polignac party as "a gang of thieves." The court was bubbling with hot envy, which reached its height when Yolande was made governess of the royal children. The disaffection spread to Paris, and thence throughout France. The name of Polignac was on every tongue, and was always coupled with a curse. When Yolande dressed simply, the queen imitated her, and the ladies of the court were compelled to follow suit. The shopkeepers, and, after them, their workpeople, then criticized the queen for her economy. Some persons declared that she dressed like a *femme de chambre*; others that she wanted to ruin the Lyons silk trade.

And still the De Polignac gang, with De Vaudreuil at their head, tugged at

Yolande's skirts, shouting for more money and higher offices. That she was not blind to their game—except so far as De Vaudreuil was concerned—is evident, for once, when too hard pushed, she cried:

"Oh, I hate you all! You are killing me to attain your own ends!"

The love affair with De Vaudreuil waxed ever stronger. Marie Antoinette took a bitter dislike to him. When she found that she could not make Yolande give him up, her fondness for the duchess began to cool. Yolande held a secondary court at Petit Trianon three times a week. Instead of running in on her informally, as of yore, the queen now sent a servant in advance to see whom Yolande might be entertaining. If the list did not suit her majesty, she stayed away, and took pains that everybody should know she did so.

The duchess was quite unruffled at the queen's disaffection, but De Vaudreuil and the others wereaghast. To please them, Yolande asked her majesty why she went through this servant-sending ceremony each time she called.

"Because," answered Marie Antoinette, "you receive certain people whom I do not care to meet."

The duchess understood at once the dig at De Vaudreuil, and retorted angrily:

"Even if your majesty chooses to stay away from my salon, I am not going to turn away the friends who cause your absence."

This meant open war. The erstwhile poor relation had actually dared to throw the glove at the feet of the Queen of France. Thereafter, her majesty most pointedly stayed away from all Yolande's entertainments.

The court, and the people at large, rejoiced at this proof that the duchess' reign was apparently nearing an end. The duchess' reign was doing nothing of the sort. Yolande resigned her position as royal governess and once more

prepared to leave Versailles. And once more the queen, forgetting all her own rancor, besought her to stay. Yolande stayed—on her own terms. The nation was furious.

For a little while longer, Yolande's star blazed brightly as ever. She was all-powerful with the queen and all-powerful in the hearts of a dozen nobles.

Then came the crash—the crash Yolande had so industriously helped on.

The people of France rose in a body and cast off the shackles that for so many centuries had bound them. It was they who, all at once, ruled the country and ruled the king along with it. And, promptly, they began to settle a long score of grievances that had been piling up since the first days of the feudal system. The royal family was ordered to Paris and to prison. And the common people began a war of extermination against the nobility.

Nearly all of the courtiers who could get away fled the country. Those who stayed were seized and guillotined.

Yolande, worst hated of them all, stayed. Although her staying meant death in a peculiarly horrible form, she stuck by the queen, and she made her worthless husband do the same. De Vaudreuil decamped overnight and made his way to Italy.

Yolande went straight to the queen and demanded the right to share the royal family's imprisonment; for which act of loyalty, I devoutly hope the recording angel put a large number of white marks on the credit side of her celestial ledger. Certainly there was plenty of empty space there for them. Marie Antoinette also deserves a few marks on the same side of the ledger for refusing to accept the useless sacrifice.

"They will tear you to pieces," wept the queen, "because they know that an attack upon you means an attack upon me. But I still have time to save you

from their fury. You shall not die through your devotion to me. I entreat you to leave the country while there is yet time."

Yolande merely laughed and shook her head. From the first, she had never obeyed the queen. Then the king himself took a hand in the argument, and this was quite another matter. For no loyal subject might disregard the commands of the Lord's anointed.

"As your sovereign," said his majesty, "I order you to leave the country at once."

Yolande fell at the queen's feet, weeping and protesting her deathless devotion. The king repeated his command.

Three hours later, at midnight, the Polignacs started for the frontier. With several of their relatives, and with De Balivière—who had begged the privilege of risking death at Yolande's side—the whole party disguised themselves as bourgeoisie and set forth in a common traveling coach. All were provided with passports.

Yolande, dressed as a chambermaid, sat on the box, beside the coachman. Then began a journey whose every mile was strewn with peril. Each town and village along the route buzzed with aristocrat killers. A thousand voices screamed maledictions upon the Duchess de Polignac.

At Sens, where they halted for new positions and a fresh relay of horses, an armed and drunken mob surrounded the coach, demanding news from Paris.

"Is the damned Polignac woman still with the queen?" yelled a blacksmith,

springing upon the hub of the front wheel and bringing his vinous face within three inches of the pretty "chambermaid's" on the box. His question brought a roar of fury from the crowd.

Yolande laughed aloud.

"The 'damned Polignac woman,'" she exulted, "has gotten what she deserved! May all the Versailles crowd fare as she has fared!"

The new postilion, who rode nearest her, turned at sound of her voice and stared at her. His mouth flew open. Yolande flashed her wonderful smile at him. His mouth clamped shut, and he flogged his horses into a gallop. When Sens was left far behind, the postilion turned in his saddle and said:

"Madame, you were magnificent! But next time speak less like a duchess. I recognized you from your voice, though I had heard it but once, and then through the park railings at Versailles."

In safety, the fugitives reached Venice. But Yolande could not outlive the monarchy which so long had been her very life. She fell ill and begged to be taken to Vienna, Marie Antoinette's girlhood home. There she learned of the queen's execution. The news literally killed her. She went to bed, turned her face to the wall, and died.

In less than six years, she had cost the French nation more than three million livres in actual cash, and had done more than almost any one else to wreck the monarchy and kill the queen.

Perhaps it was sheer poetic justice that she did not survive the wreckage she had wrought.

Next month: Elizabeth Chudleigh.



The Bubble, Reputation



By Walter Prichard Eaton

Author of "The Man Who Called Over the Barn,"
"Marrying Samuel," etc.

A GREAT dramatist is authority for the statement that, "The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones." This is, no doubt, in a measure true, yet it would be grossly unfair to blame personally certain great ones of the past for the evil that has lived after them and borne their names. For instance, it may be doubted whether Louis XIV. of France was all that he should have been. His private life would hardly have escaped censure in Upper Montclair, New Jersey, or West Newton, Massachusetts; and his public acts were not always calculated to promote social justice and universal brotherhood. But to blame him for all the gilt furniture that has ever since stood around the walls of hotel ballrooms and borne his name is a libel even on that lax and luxuriant monarch. Yet such is his fate. You, who are familiar with history, I, who know next to nothing about it, are alike in this—when we hear the words "Louis XIV.," we do not think of a great monarch with a powdered wig and a powdered mistress, of magnificent fountains and courtiers and ladies dancing the gavotte. Not at all, We think, both of us, of a gilt chair with a brocaded seat—slightly worn—and maybe a sofa to match. If you say that you don't, I must politely, but firmly call you a liar.

Alas, poor Louis XIV. was not the only worthy—or unworthy—of the past who has come down to the present not as a personality, but as a piece of furniture, a dog, a boot, or some other equally ignominious thing! Speaking of furniture, there's the morris chair. The man who made the morris chair was a great and good man—not because he made the morris chair, but in spite of it! He composed haunting poems, he wrote lovely prose romances of the far-off days of knights and ladyes and magic spells, such as that hight "The Water of the Wondrous Isles," a right brave book mayhap you have not perused, to your exceeding great loss, for beautiful it is and fair to read and full of the mighty desire of a man for a maid. Beside all this, he printed lovely books by other writers, and designed wall paper, and painted pictures, and thundered against the deadening effect on men of mechanical toil, and in social theories was far in advance of his age. Such a man was William Morris—known to-day to the mass of mankind for one of the most accursed articles of furniture ever devised by human ingenuity gone astray! Every day, in a million homes, men and women sit in morris chairs—made by machinery!—and read— — — and — — — (deleted by censor). Such, alas, is fame!

Then there was Queen Anne—in many respects an estimable monarch, "Queen Anne"—speak the name aloud, and then tell me the picture you get. Is it a picture of the lady? Is it a picture of Pope and Dryden sitting in a London coffeehouse? No, it is not—that is, unless you are a very learned, or a very young, person. It is a picture of a horrible architectural monstrosity built about thirty or forty years ago in any American city or suburb, and bearing certain vague resemblances to a home for human beings. Whatever else Queen Anne was, she was not an architect, and she wasn't to blame for those houses. But that doesn't count. She gets the blame, just the same. She is known forever now by those gables and that gingerbread, those shingles and stains.

She had a predecessor on the English throne by the name of Charles. Like Louis in France, he wasn't all he should have been, and there were those in his own day who didn't entirely approve of him. But it wasn't because of his dogs. However, if you mention King Charles now, it is a dog you think of—a small, eary dog, with somewhat splay feet and a seventeenth-century monarchical preference for the society of ladies and the softest cushion. Maybe the royal gentleman didn't deserve anything better of posterity, but, anyhow, that's what he got.

St. Bernhard fared better. If one had to be remembered by a dog, what better dog could he select, save possibly an Airedale? Big, strong, faithful, wise, true to type for centuries, the most reliable of God's creatures—including man by courtesy in the category—the St. Bernhard is a monument for—well, not for a king, and a king didn't get him; for a saint, rather. It is doubtful if the old monk is playing any lamentations on his harp.

But I'm not so sure about that peerless military leader, General A. E.

Burnside. When you have risen to lead an army corps against your country's foes, when you have commanded men and sat your horse for a statue on the grounds of the State capitol or the intersection of Main and State Streets, it really is rather rough to be remembered for your whiskers. Of course, as a wit remarked of Shaw, no man is responsible for his relatives, but his whiskers are his own fault. Nevertheless, how is a great general to know that his military exploits will be forgotten, while his whiskers thunder down the ages, as it were, progressing in the course of time, with the changing fashions, from bank presidents to Presbyterian elders and finally to stage butlers? At last even the stage butlers are shaving clean, and a stroke of the razor wipes out a military reputation, blasts a general's immortality! Fame is a fickle jade.

An artistic reputation lasts longer, and resists the barber, proving the superiority of the arts to militarism. "Van Dyck" is still a generally familiar appellation, and sounds the same, no matter which way you spell it. I hope the printer gets the spelling right in what follows, by the way, because I've been at great pains to look it up in the dictionary. Of course there's no rhyme nor reason in it—artist and whiskers should be spelled the same way. Only they're not. "Something ought to be done about it." However, to resume — If you tell me John Jones has a Vandyke, I don't visualize John as an art collector standing in his gallery, contemplating a masterpiece, by the great Flemish painter. I visualize him as a man with a certain type of beard. I may later think of the master who put these beards upon his portraits. Then again, I may not. Exactly the same would be true if I told you John Jones had a Vandyke, instead of the other way about. Don't contradict me—you know it's so. It is nearly as diffi-

cult to-day to own a Van Dyck canvas as it is to paint one, but anybody can raise a Vandyke beard. In fact, many still do, and thus keep the master's memory green. "By their whiskers ye shall know them."

A military reputation, as we have already proved by the case of General Burnside, is a precarious thing. How many patrons of Atlantic City, I wonder, know the hero of the wars in the Low Countries and his greatest triumph by a certain hotel on the Board Walk, and would be hard put to say which half of the hyphenated name was the general and which the battle? Then there was Wellington, who at one time threatened to be remembered for his boots, and Blücher, who still is remembered for his.

A certain Massachusetts statesman—anybody elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives is a statesman—once said that the greatest triumph of Napoleon was when Theodore Roosevelt stood silent at his tomb. This is witty, but, like most witty sayings, not quite true. It was a great triumph, of course, but rather spectacular. The greatest triumphs are not showy. What actually proves Napoleon's greatness is the fact that he is still remembered as a commander after generations have selected from the tray of French pastry the delectable and indigestible morsel of sugar, flour, and lard that bears his name. To have a toothsome article of food named after you, and then to be still remembered for your actual achievements, is the ultimate test of human greatness. Only a Napoleon can meet it. Even Washington might not now be known as the father of his country if his pie had been a better one.

Who was King, for instance? Was he the cook, or the man cooked for? I fancy I knew once, but I have forgotten. But chicken à la King will live to perpetuate his name as long as there

are chickens to be eaten and men to eat them. Even Sardou, spectacular dramatist, for all his "*Toscas*" and "*Fédoras*"—and ten to one you think of "*Fédora*" as a hat!—lives for me, a dramatic critic, by virtue of eggs Victorien Sardou, a never-to-be-too-much enjoyed concoction secured at the old Brevoort House in New York. He may actually have invented this recipe himself, for he was a great lover of the pleasures of the table. If so, it was his masterpiece. An egg is poached on the tender heart of an artichoke, and garnished with a peculiar yellow sauce, topped with a truffle. Around all four sides are laid little bunches of fresh asparagus tips. What is "*Tosca*" compared to this?

Then, of course, there was Mr. Baldwin. Who was Mr. Baldwin? Thoreau probably knew him, since in his pasture he found the wild apple that has since become a standard of the world. But we don't know, any more than we know who Mr. Bartlett was; when we eat one of his pears, or Mr. Logan, father of the wine-red berry. In this case, the Scripture is indeed verified, that by their fruits shall ye know them.

Two or three times a year my wife gets certain clothes of mine from the closet and combs them for moths, hangs them flapping in the breeze for a while, and puts them back. Among the lot is a garment once much worn by congressmen, church ushers, and wedding guests, known to the fashion editors as a "frock coat," and to normal human beings as a Prince Albert. Doubtless, in the flux of styles—like a pendulum, styles swing forth and back again—the Prince Albert will once more be correct, and my wife's labor will not have been in vain, while the estimable consort of England's haircloth-sofa and black-walnut-bureau queen will continue to be remembered of posterity by this outlandish garment. Poor man,

after all, he achieved little else to be remembered by!

And as for the queen herself, she will be remembered by a state of mind. Already "mid-Victorian" has little or nothing to do with Victoria, and is losing its suggestion, even, of a time period. It is coming to stand for a mental and moral attitude—in fact, for priggishness and moral timidity. Queen Victoria was a great and good woman, and her home life was, as the two women so clearly pointed out when they left the theater, totally different from that of Cleopatra. But she is going to give her name to a mental attitude, just the same, even as the Philistines and the Puritans. It pays to pick the period you queen it over rather carefully. Elizabeth had better luck. To be Elizabethan is to be everything gay and dashing and outdoory and adventuresome, with insatiable curiosity and the gift of song. Of course, Shakespeare, Drake, Raleigh ought to have the credit, but they don't get it, any more than Tennyson comes in on the Victorian discredit. The head that wears a crown may well lie uneasy.

The memory of many a man has been perpetuated, all unwittingly, by the manufacturers and advertising agencies. Here I tread on dangerous ground, and the editor reaches for his blue pencil. But please, Mr. Editor, let me point out that so "generously good" a philanthropist as George W. Childs became a name literally in the mouth of thousands. He became a cigar. Then there was Lord Lister. He, too, has become a name in the mouths of thousands—as a mouth wash. And how about the only daughter of the prophet? Fatima was her name.

Who was Lord Raglan, or was he a lord? He is a kind of overcoat sleeve now. Who was Mr. Mackintosh? Was it Lord Brougham, too? Gasoline has extinguished his immortality. Glad-

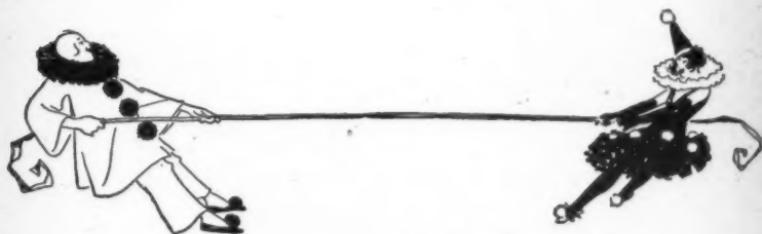
stone has become a bag! Gainsborough is a hat. The beautiful Madame Pompadour, beloved of kings, is a kind of hair cut now. Imperial Caesar, dead and turned to clay, is an obstetrical operation. The Mikado of Japan is a joke set to music—heavenly music, to be sure, but with its tongue in its angelic cheek. An operetta did that. You cannot think of the Mikado of Japan in terms of royal dignity. I defy you to try. Ko-ko and Katisha keep getting in the way, and you hear the pitty-pat of Yum-Yum's little feet and the bounce of those elliptical billiard balls. Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta is perhaps the most potent document for democracy since the Communist Manifesto!

The other day I heard a woman say that she had got to begin banting. A nice verb, to bant, though not approved of by the dictionary, which scornfully terms it "humorous and colloquial." The humor, to be sure, is usually for the other people, not for the person banting. Do you know, I wonder, the derivation of this word? It means, of course, to induce this too, too solid flesh to melt, by the careful avoidance of farinaceous, saccharine, and oily foods, and occasionally its meaning is stretched by the careless to include also rolling on the bedroom floor fifteen times before breakfast and standing up twenty minutes after meals. Yet the word is derived from the* name of William Banting, who was a London cabinet-maker. Cabinetmaking is a worthy trade; indeed, it is one of the most appealing of all trades; in fact, it's not a trade, it's an art. I haven't a doubt that William made splendid furniture, especially chairs, for nobody appreciates a nice, roomy, strong chair like a fat man. I haven't a doubt that it was his ambition in life to be remembered for his furniture, even as the brothers Adam, as Chippendale and Sheraton. But it was not to be. In an unfortunate

moment, William discovered that by eating fewer potatoes and cutting out two lumps of sugar from his tea, he could take off some of the corpulence that troubled him. He told of his discovery—and the world knows him now as a method of getting number 44 ladies into a perfect 36. I have always felt sorry for William Banting. He is one of the tragic figures of history.

Of course there are many more, if none other quite so poignant. But my space is drawing to a close, and you must recall them for yourself. For some paragraphs now, I have been working myself up to a climax of prophecy. I have been planning to

predict what Kaiser William II. will be noted for in the days that are to come. It seemed to me that would make rather a neat and timely conclusion for this little essay. But, Gentle Reader, I've got to turn that job over to you, also. Not that the editor won't give me the space, but after long and painful concentration, I have been unable to think of anything bad enough. It may turn out that he will be known simply by the-meek and nourishing kaiser roll on the breakfast table—the only surviving relic of a monarchical vocabulary in a peaceful and democratic universe. Perhaps, for him, that would be the bitterest fate of all, the ultimate irony!



LAUGHTER

I HEARD a burst of laughter in the wood.
 'Twas shaggy Pan
 Voicing a gust of mirth as old as man,
 And I—I understood.
 Who would not joy to see
 The buoyance of the bee
 And bourgeoning tree,
 The rapture of the reed
 From its chill bondage freed,
 To list
 That ecstatic lutanist,
 The hermit thrush,
 Raising an anthem in the underbrush?
 Earth seemed so good,
 So fair to scan,
 That something in me stirred
 At thought of bee and bough and bird,
 And I laughed back at Pan!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



“Her Feet Beneath Her Petticoat”—

By F. E. Bailey

II.—The Detroit Scandal

LAURELTINE wandered slowly along the autumn road, leaving her girlish soul in those ineffable mists of tears shed by pious Nature over the dying year. She had the most beautiful legs, veiled at the moment in golden-brown silk to match a suit of tweed. She knew it was wrong to wear silk stockings with tweed, but she knew also that, because her years numbered almost sixteen, the legs would soon disappear forever, and there is an old saying about a short life and a merry one.

Rounding a bend in the rolling English road, made by the rolling English drunkard before the Roman came to Rye or out to Severn strode, Laureltine came upon a beautiful youth who surveyed, beneath its upturned bonnet, the power unit of a stationary motor car. He held what appeared to be a strap in his hand, and his lips moved as if in prayer. At the sound of Laureltine's little feet upon the road, he raised his head and became aware of her violet eyes like the fish pools of Heshbon, her long, ripe-corn plait, the forlorn beauty of her winsome face. Being a person of some enterprise, he raised his hat and said:

“I beg your pardon, but could you lend me a fairly stout hairpin—not the thin, wiggly kind, but one of the thick sort you don't get so many of for a penny?”

“I know exactly what you mean. Our housemaid uses them,” replied Laureltine politely. “I'm so sorry I

can't help you. It's only about two miles to the town. If I were going that way, I'd show you. Unfortunately I'm not.”

“It's the fan belt, you see,” explained the beautiful youth, indicating the strap, with the motorist's pathetic faith that he is carrying his audience with him. “The connection's bust, and I could fake it with a hairpin. The fan won't work, of course, without the belt.”

“What sort of car is it?” queried Laureltine, casting an appraising eye over the brand-new vehicle.

“A ‘Detroit Scandal’—that is, a Shontsmobile, called after Mr. Shonts, the proprietor. We christened it ‘The Detroit Scandal’ because it's made in Detroit, Michigan, and gives such a ridiculous value for the money, even for Detroit. She'll touch fifty-five easily. I wish I could offer you a lift home.”

“Why are you coming to Avonbridge?”

“To see a girl friend,” replied the youth, with remarkable directness seeing he had had no previous idea of coming to Avonbridge at all.

“I'm so sorry for the poor girl,” murmured Laureltine, gazing at the motionless car. “I suppose this is of no use whatever?”

She withdrew a bronze pin from the region of her right ear, and handed it to him.

“The very thing! Thanks awfully!” exclaimed the youth.

He bent over the car, and had adjusted the fan belt in less than a minute.

"I wish I might offer to run you home," he hazarded again almost timidly.

"Our cottage is called Upway and it's about a mile farther," came in Laureltine's clear, cool tones. "I thank you. I'd rather motor with you than walk alone."

The youth tried to fathom the depths of this without success. He started the car and gave Laureltine a courtly hand.

"My name is George Betteridge," he observed, putting in the clutch with great nicety.

"I am Miss Shaw," replied the passenger.

When they reached Upway, Laureltine's mother, who had enjoyed cub hunting herself not so very many years previously, invited Mr. George Betteridge to luncheon.

II.

Laureltine reclined delicately under the shoulder of a heather-clad hill, eating Mr. George Betteridge's chocolates slowly and fastidiously. Attired in a little blue silk frock with shoes and stockings to match, she recalled the violet depths of tropic seas. Hundreds of yards below, the Detroit Scandal stood forsaken in a casual byroad. It was a perfect afternoon of Indian summer.

Mr. Betteridge's eighteen-year-old soul drowned itself with splendid, reckless immolation in Laureltine's violet eyes. He began to speak, as man always does in his divine moments, incapable of letting things alone. Fortunately the words were not his.

"Lay by my side your bunch of purple heather,
The last red asters of an autumn day,
And let us sit and talk of love together,
As once in May,"

he moaned plaintively.

Laureltine consumed her chocolate and thought lazily that he was rather a good-looking boy. Mr. Betteridge laid down a symbolic sprig of heather, and, headstrong with love, proceeded to the second, most daring verse:

"Give me your hand, that I may press it gently,
And if the others see, what matter they?
Look in mine eyes with your sweet eyes intently,
As once in May!

"I wish we'd known one another in May," he prattled on fatuously. "You're spring incarnate, Laureltine."

"I wish you wouldn't recite German poetry," complained Laureltine, because she was happy and didn't want to be bothered with great, rugged emotions.

"It's not German!"

"It is. You call it 'As once in May,' but in the original, it's 'Wie einst im Mai.' In any case, I don't want you to hold my hand and look into my eyes. You aren't to fall in love with me, George. If you do, we shall have to part."

"Not fall in love?" gasped Mr. Betteridge. "Not—— My dear Laureltine, Providence created you for me to fall in love with!"

Laureltine sat up.

"The great curse of being pretty is that every one thinks he must fall in love with me," she said plaintively. "They never seem to imagine I want to be amused, or to be talked to intelligently. I dare say I know better than you exactly how pretty I am. Pull yourself together, George! You've been quite amusing for a week, and I had hopes of you. To-day you've been disappointing. You positively spoil a beautiful afternoon."

She chose another chocolate with considerable aloofness.

"That's all nonsense," declared Mr. Betteridge authoritatively. "Girls—pretty girls—are made to be loved."

You wouldn't like it if I didn't love you. The fact that I do provides the strawberries and cream of life; otherwise, it would be mere porridge. Why did you look back at me as I came out of Avonbridge in the car and you were going in? You must have liked me a little. Then the car providentially broke down—"

"You mean you stopped and unhooked the fan belt and waited for me and told that extremely thin yarn about a hairpin. When I gave you one, you simply hooked up the belt and put the hairpin in your pocket. I expect you moon over it when you're alone. I understand cars fairly well, Mr. Betteridge. We run a car in peace time."

"What you say proves that you were attracted even more than I thought!" triumphed her lover.

"It merely proves there's an awful famine in men in these parts. Anything's better than nothing."

"Then you don't love me?"

"No," said Laureltine lazily, "and you don't love me. I'm pretty, and you like pretty girls, and that's all. For Heaven's sake, don't try to imagine you're in love! You flirt quite nicely, George, for your age, although men of thirty do it much better, but if you insist on being in love, you'll get heavy and moody, and try to order me about, and be generally impossible. Men always begin to lay down rules of conduct for the girls they love. Now I've always been encouraged to do as I like."

Mr. Betteridge felt sure she wanted to be won against her will. He slid his left arm round her shoulders.

"Laureltine!" he murmured thrillingly.

Laureltine got up.

"You may not have observed that I am not a kitchen maid," she said, in a little icy voice. "We will go home, please."

That evening, on the point of going

to bed, Laureltine observed to her mother:

"Why do men always fall in love with a pretty girl and want to touch her? Why can't they just be amusing? I hate being touched!"

Laureltine's mother smiled internally. Her outward gravity was enormous.

"They mean well," she explained. "Honestly, I believe they think we like it. They imagine, if one of them descends to admire a girl, or kiss her, it's a kind of priceless testimonial. You see, men think men are wonderful creatures. They think we think so, too."

An evil grin passed between Laureltine and her mother.

III.

As she lay in bed, a handful of gravel struck Laureltine's window. At first startled, she became interested and smiled into the dark. A second handful came; then a third. Laureltine sighed.

"There'll be half the garden path in my room in a minute," she murmured and crawled out of bed.

She put on her prettiest *saut-de-lit*, taking care that it did not hide the ribbon at the top of a distracting nightie, crossed to her window, and leaned out, dangling two long plaits between heaven and the lawn below.

"Well, George," she said, "on what grounds can you excuse this outrage?"

George Betteridge, standing in a white patch of moonlight, looked up hungrily, and spoke from the disadvantage of the ground.

"I had to see you again, Laureltine. I'm on sick leave, you see, and I've got to report to-morrow. I shall motor up to-night. I ought to have gone down to see my people and I haven't. I couldn't. I was on my way when I met you."

Laureltine marveled how he could

suppose these personal details affected her, and listened.

"I wish to apologize for what I did this afternoon," continued Mr. Betteridge, in tones stiff with consciousness of doing the sound thing. "I ought to have known better. I behaved like a cad. I don't suppose you'll ever forgive me, or be sufficiently interested to care whether I apologize or not, but if you understand, it means a good deal to me in the way of—er—self-respect. I beg your pardon very humbly, Laureltine. I see now that to a girl like you, a kiss from a fellow like me is almost an insult. I mean, if you wanted kisses, you could have them all day long from people a great deal more attractive than me. I seem to be talking a lot of rot, but it's difficult to explain."

"I don't call an apology rot. It's the very least you could do," said Laureltine aloud.

Inwardly she marveled how quickly he was learning. He began to interest her.

"It is indeed," agreed the reduced Mr. Betteridge. "Unfortunately, I can't do any more. There's nothing one can do to wipe out that sort of cad's trick."

His voice shook a little from sincerity, misery, and a great, unmanageable emotion too much for his years. Laureltine, in her wisdom, realized how much the male suffers in pride at the age of eighteen from having done the wrong thing.

"George," she murmured, with that in her voice which made his heart leap, "there's a ladder by the tool shed. Get

it and climb up very quietly. I've something for you."

Appalled by her generosity, wabbly-kneed from emotional stress, he obeyed. He stood bareheaded with his shoulders on a level with her window sill, and waited. If she had told him to dive headfirst, he would have obeyed. Her nearness, the scent of her hair, almost choked him.

"Good-by, George," she was saying gently. "I'm not cross any longer. I've enjoyed our week most awfully. I wish you heaps of luck. I expect you'll make a ripping soldier."

In just such a manner, she gave him back his pride. She gave him more. Laureltine, the most beautiful thing in the world, leaned from her window and held up her perfect mouth.

George's heart leaped into his throat. For a moment he held her close, his lips against hers, her ripe-corn hair against his cheek, all the loveliness and magic of her youth his for the moment. Then she was gone, the window closed, the world empty, barren, hopeless, unprofitable.

Far away, Laureltine, in her white bed with pink hangings, heard the pur of the Detroit Scandal's four cylinders. For the second time, she smiled into the dark.

"Poor boy!" she murmured. "He's rather amateurish. He nearly missed my mouth altogether. But it made him frightfully happy. On the whole, it was worth it."

Breathing the rare ether of those who do good deeds, Laureltine slept.

The third story in this series, "Her Absolute Discretion," will be published in the June AINSLEE'S.





A Question of Orchids

By Adele Luehrmann

Author of "The Acid Test,"
"Love and the Rules," etc.

ONE morning, as Naomi Jackson entered her boarding-house dining room for breakfast, a greenish-blue envelope lying beside her plate shrieked to her across the room that the Mendoza Theatrical Agency had favored her with a communication. It proved to be brief and businesslike:

See Max Bayer at two o'clock Thursday about Flora in "Idle Wives." Look swell.

Reminding herself for the twentieth time that she simply must go that very day and tell Mrs. Mendoza that she was playing, and was consequently not open to an engagement, she put the letter back into its envelope, then tore it across as a sign to the waitress, when she cleared the table, that it was rubbish. As she did so, she glanced casually around and was rather startled to meet the tense stare of two dark eyes, which were turned away the instant her own encountered them.

The dark eyes belonged to Mrs. Rex Stanley—Naomi did not know her stage name—a pretty, black-haired young woman who had come to the house very recently with her husband, also young and also on the stage. They were "resting" at present, they had told the landlady, according to her statement to Naomi, and the latter had at once made sympathetic advances toward an acquaintance, knowing from personal ex-

perience how wearisome and disheartening "resting" could be. But the advances had failed of their object. They had seemed, indeed, to embarrass Mrs. Stanley, for she had flushed, and at the first opportunity had fled.

Her behavior had greatly puzzled Naomi, who could not make the Stanleys out at all. Stage people, as a rule, are very approachable, but the Stanleys seemed to want nothing of anybody except to be let alone. Yet they seemed to get no pleasure out of being alone. At their little corner table, they sat through their meals in almost unbroken silence, he looking sulky and she depressed. Twice Naomi had thought she detected signs of recent tears in the big, dark eyes, and only the night before, something had happened that had set her to wondering afresh.

She had been later than usual in getting home, having stopped for a bite with Billy Wade after the performance, and she had been especially careful to make no noise in going upstairs to her room. The house seemed as still as a tomb, with no ray of light from any sill or keyhole, and she had therefore been rather startled when, in passing the Stanleys' door, a despairing wail had reached her from within:

"I can't stand it any more, Rex! I'm sick of it—sick!"

And the man's angry retort: "I guess it's me you're sick of. If it is, just say so, and I'll get out."

Then sobbing.

What was the matter? What was it that Mrs. Stanley could not stand? If it was her husband, she had apparently refrained from admitting the fact to him, for he now sat opposite her, as usual, gloomily absorbed in his food. She seemed to have no appetite. Her napkin lay folded beside her plate, and she sat, her hands in her lap, her eyes on her untasted section of ham omelet.

Her chin was rigidly set, her lips pressed together; her whole body seemed tense. She looked like a person braced for decisive action, and the fact struck Naomi forcibly, for an expression of determination was not characteristic of Mrs. Stanley's face. The face itself was delicately molded and plastic, and should, Naomi thought, lend itself well to the play of emotion. Her dark eyes, despite dejection, were never dull, and her smile, fugitive and wraithlike though it was, had still a warm winsomeness. It was a pity that she did not smile often, a pity that she was so unhappy. With a little animation, she might have been exceedingly attractive. She was pretty enough, and dressed simply and with natural good taste. There was nothing cheap looking about her clothes or herself, nothing "actressy." It really was too bad that she didn't brace up and, if it was that sulky husband of hers that she was sick of, just tell him so.

Thus argued Naomi to herself, with the cheerful inexperience of the unwedded, until the arrival of the waitress with her breakfast and morning paper cut short her ruminations on her neighbors, who presently took themselves off and left her alone in the dining room. But she had by that time become so engrossed in the review of a new play that she did not notice their

going, nor was she aware that Mrs. Stanley had reentered the room until she heard her voice:

"I—I beg your pardon, Miss Jackson, but—"

Naomi looked up with a start.

"Oh!" she said. "I didn't hear you come in."

"I—I'm sorry to disturb you," faltered Mrs. Stanley. "But I wanted to—ask you something."

"You didn't disturb me," Naomi answered cordially. "Won't you sit down?"

"Oh, no, thank you. I only came back for a moment. I wanted to ask you if—" She glanced down at the torn blue letter on the table. "I noticed that letter when you were reading it, and I thought it must be from Mrs. Mendoza."

"It is," said Naomi, laughing. "Did you get one, too? About seeing Bayer to-day?"

Mrs. Stanley nodded, but she did not smile. Her eyes were tense and anxious.

"About the part of *Flora in Idle Wives?*" she asked.

"Yes."

"Are you going to try for it—if you don't mind my asking?"

"Of course I don't mind. No, I'm not. You see, I have a part already. I'm playing now."

"Yes, that's what I thought, but when I saw that letter I—well, I couldn't help wondering. You see, if—" Mrs. Stanley hesitated; then, reconsidering her impulse to offer an explanation, she said instead: "Well, thank you for telling me," and with that turned abruptly and hurried away.

Naomi stared after her in surprise. How extraordinary! How anxiously she had put her question, and how relieved she had seemed by the answer! She must want the part badly. Could it be that she was worrying about money? But no, that did not appear

likely, for in one of their brief conversations, she had spoken of having seen a play that Naomi was sure she could not have got passes for, and hard-up actors would not have bought theater tickets. Her anxiety was evidently not due to want of money. What, then, was the cause of it?

Naomi got her answer sooner than she had expected. She ran into Mrs. Stanley a few hours later at the Mendoza Agency. The latter was just coming out as she entered, and when, after finishing her errand, Naomi was hurrying away, she was surprised to find her fellow lodger waiting for her.

"Miss Jackson, you must have thought it awfully funny, the way I acted this morning," Mrs. Stanley blurted out, her face pink with embarrassment. "But the reason was that I knew that if you were going to try for the part, it wouldn't be any use for me to."

"Oh!" murmured Naomi, with a stare of wonder. "But that's absurd, you know," she added quickly. "It's really just the other way. You're lots nearer the type they want than I am. Jane Downey, who played the part in the New York company, is very dark, you know."

"Oh, is she?" The question was tremulously eager. "I never saw her. I—I haven't been in New York very much."

"You're much the same type," said Naomi, anxious to encourage.

"But my clothes! I'm so scared about my clothes, Miss Jackson! Mrs. Mendoza says it's a New York society play and the dressing is the most important thing, and that Mr. Bayer will judge me by my clothes. And these I have on are the best I've got."

"They're perfectly all right. You look very smart. You needn't worry about that at all."

Naomi hesitated. She was tempted to tell her companion that if she would

only buck up and get a more confident manner, it would improve her appearance far more than the best clothes in the world. But Mrs. Stanley looked so anxious and distraught that Naomi feared such advice might do harm rather than good.

"The part of *Flora* is rather lively," she began, choosing her words carefully. "She's young and pretty and rich and used to having her own way, and to having people bow down to her—expects to be the whole show wherever she goes. You know the kind—the typical spoiled American woman who has never done a thing on earth to justify her existence, yet thinks she's the cream of creation. You know. You see them everywhere."

Mrs. Stanley nodded. Her eyes were troubled.

"Yes, Mrs. Mendoza told me to act animated to Bayer—that it was a comedy part," she answered. She drew a long breath. "Well, I've played comedy—some real good parts," she added with a little spurt of self-confidence.

"What have you played?" asked Naomi.

The question was evidently a mistake, for Mrs. Stanley's face clouded instantly.

"Oh, that's just it, Miss Jackson!" she broke out in accents of utter despair. "Whenever anybody asks me that, I just lose all my nerve. It's worst with managers. When I tell them what I've done, they lose interest right away. You see, I've never played in what you'd call a good company—that is, not since I married. My husband—that is, we want to stay together and—well, we've just had to take what we could get. You know how it is."

"Do you mean that you never take engagements except in the same company?"

"Yes. My husband says there's no sense in being married if we're separated all the time. He wants a home."

"But can you have a home, traveling all the time?" asked Naomi.

"Well, we can have each other." The young wife sighed involuntarily as if the fact had its drawbacks. "But, of course, we can't get ahead in the profession. Whenever theatrical people marry, they just have to sacrifice one thing or the other, don't they?"

"It does seem so—usually," assented Naomi cautiously, unwilling to give comfort or aid to either side in a con-nubial argument.

"It's *always* so," insisted Mrs. Stanley, her dark eyes tense and gloomy. "I don't know a single couple that have ever amounted to anything on the stage sticking together. It doesn't mean that you have to get a divorce or stop caring for each other, does it? That's what I tell my husband. But he can't see it."

"Is he willing for you to take this part if you get it?"

The black eyebrows above the dark eyes contracted sharply, and Mrs. Stanley's chin took on the rigidity Naomi had remarked that morning at breakfast.

"I'll take it anyway—if I can get it," she said. "I just can't stand it any longer! I told Rex so last night. He's just got to let me! Oh, you don't know, Miss Jackson, what it's like!" she went on, relaxing into tremulousness as she took the defensive again. "One-night stands and cheap stock companies year after year! You get so you hate yourself! You get to feel as cheap as the hotels you stay at! You forget how to act! You lose your standards of acting and people and clothes and—everything!"

"Why, we haven't been to New York in three years, not since the summer after we married. We wouldn't be here now if the stock theater we were playing in hadn't burned down and we had to come to look for an engagement. And when I saw a real good play again, and some real acting, it just made me

sick! I just felt as if I couldn't go back to the sort of thing we'd been doing. And Rex felt the same way at first—I know he did. You see, we'd both been in good things before we married. We were in a good company at the time—that's how we met—and we thought we could always get what we wanted. But of course we couldn't. We found that out fast enough."

Naomi nodded sympathetically. She might have reminded the bemoaner of her fate that getting what you want is pretty much of an impossibility under any conditions, but she knew that it never helps the unhappy to show them that they are not monopolists. And she wanted to help Mrs. Stanley—not because she was Mrs. Stanley, but because she needed help. Max Bayer would never engage her if she applied to him in her present mood, or with her habitual manner of dejection and diffidence. Mrs. Mendoza's advice to "act animated" was good as far as it went, but it did not go far enough, or, rather, deep enough. Mrs. Stanley's manner had a root. The root was self-distrust.

"We've been awfully unhappy since we've been in New York," she continued, after pausing only long enough to sigh. -

Now that the sluices of her confidence were open, her feelings flowed out in a steady stream, and Naomi lingered patiently in the empty waiting room of the agency to receive them. It was as impossible for her to resist an appeal to her sympathies as for an oak to shake off the clinging tendrils of a vine.

"We felt ashamed, too—though there was nothing to be ashamed of, really. But in New York—to New York people—being on the stage means playing on Broadway, and if you tell them you've been in stock out in Tacoma, or doing one-night stands in Texas, they think you must be awfully punk—that's all. That's why I acted the way I did

when you talked to me first. It wasn't that I didn't want to be friends. I did, awfully. And I thought it was just sweet of you to speak to me the way you did. But we'd heard that you were playing in a New York company, and I was afraid that when you found out what we'd been doing, you wouldn't think much of us——"

"Oh, Mrs. Stanley, how absurd you are!" Naomi broke in with a laugh. "Don't you suppose I could tell by looking at you that you were nice? I didn't care about anything else. Besides, I've done one-nights and stock myself—everybody does. It's fine experience."

"New York managers don't think so."

The retort was true and Naomi knew it.

"Some don't," she admitted. "But they engage people in spite of it—often. So just forget about that. You look this part—that's the important thing. And you can play it; you've had the experience to do it. Just think about that and go after it with the determination to *land* it."

Mrs. Stanley's sensitive face had responded instantly to the stimulation of encouragement. It was aglow with hope in a moment.

"Oh, I believe I can, Miss Jackson!" she declared eagerly. "You know, it seems awfully queer, but last night was the first time that I'd really made up my mind that I just couldn't go on any more playing in cheap companies. I'd told Rex so and—well, we'd quarreled about it. You see, he'd just heard about a stock company in Canada that we could join right away, and that's what brought it on. I just said I wouldn't go. And I stuck to it, too! And I just prayed and prayed all night that I wouldn't have to. And this morning that letter came about this part. It was like an answer, wasn't it? Only—only I can't help wishing it was for some other kind of part. Feeling the way I

do, if somebody were to cast me for a society queen in Squeedunk, I don't believe I could get away with it."

The sudden brightness had faded from her eyes; her face drooped once more in the despondency of doubt.

What was to be done with her? Her fears were ridiculous, but Naomi could understand them. She had herself known something of that sense of ostracism that New York gives to the actor who has never acted there. Being of a more buoyant temper, she had, however, speedily attacked the windmill and demolished it. But Mrs. Stanley could not see that it was only a windmill. She was the prey of her own foolish phantoms.

It was a pity. She was really quite like Jane Downey—about the same height and figure and of the same brunet coloring. It was hardly probable that Bayer would have any applicant that afternoon who was more like the original interpreter of the rôle he wished to fill. The fact would count tremendously for Mrs. Stanley. But—oh, dear, she'd never get anything from Max Bayer if she went into his office looking like that, as if she hoped people would excuse her for living! *He* wouldn't excuse her! *He*'d think she ought to be dead!

What could be done? Naomi looked at her watch. It was nearly one o'clock, and the appointment with Bayer was at two—not much time in which to change the leopard's spots.

"Let's go and have lunch," said Naomi with sudden decision, turning toward the door.

The best thing to do, she thought, was to give her companion some substantial food—she had eaten no breakfast, Naomi remembered—and try to talk a little gumption into her.

"I—I'm not going home to lunch," said Mrs. Stanley, thinking that Naomi was merely suggesting that they walk back to their boarding house together.

"I—I don't want to see my husband until it's over. He'll just upset me."

"I didn't mean to go home. I want you to have lunch with me somewhere."

"Oh, I'd love to! I just can't bear to be alone. But you have lunch with me—please!"

"No, no," said Naomi. "I invited you first. Besides, I've got a job, and you haven't."

The argument was unanswerable, and Mrs. Stanley assented.

"There's a nice little restaurant in the next block," she said. "Rex and I go there for lunch sometimes."

"Well," agreed Naomi tentatively, and they made their way to the street.

Then Naomi had an inspiration.

"I'll tell you," she said. "Let's go over to one of the Fifth Avenue tea rooms. They have awfully good things to eat and—and there are the right kind of people over there—I mean the kind you ought to see and—imitate. If you could catch the right manner and hang on to it until you see Bayer, I'm sure you'd land that part. Because you're the type and—"

"Oh, that's a wonderful idea!" cried Mrs. Stanley. "I'm awfully imitative. Why, when I go to the theater, I act and talk like the star all next day. Rex always notices it."

"Really?" murmured Naomi absently. She was thinking. Her idea was developing.

"But—look at that clock! Have we time? I mustn't be late. And if we have to wait long, I'll get awfully nervous and upset."

"You won't be late," answered Naomi. She signaled a passing taxi and calmly ignored her companion's astonished protest. "Jump in," she ordered, and as she followed, she gave her instructions to the chauffeur. They were brief.

"The Ritz," she said.

There was a gasp from Mrs. Stan-

ley, then silence—deliberate on Naomi's part. She knew the value of a pause.

"Miss Jackson, did you tell him to go to the—Ritz?"

"Yes," said Naomi calmly. "Don't you like it there?"

"Why—I've never been there. Isn't it awfully expensive?"

"Oh, no, not for what you get."

"But—it's awfully fashionable, isn't it? And—dressy?"

"Dressy? Oh, dear no! Very nice people go there."

This gave Mrs. Stanley food for thought, apparently, for she said nothing more. But her question had suggested a new idea to Naomi, who leaned forward and looked down the street at the line of shops ahead of them.

"Stop at that florist's, there," she said to the driver. "You don't mind waiting, do you?" she asked casually of her companion, as the car drew up at the curb. "I'll only be a minute."

She flew into the shop.

"Violets," she demanded.

She selected two generous bunches and handed the salesman a bill. But as he turned away to get change, her eyes chanced to fall on a vase of orchids.

"Wait! I think I'll take orchids."

Orchids, of course! The very thing!

Her eyes glistened as the vase was placed before her. She felt that rare and joyous shock that is the creative artist's when he gets a new idea and knows it for a flash of genius. Nothing could be better for her purpose than orchids. They exuded luxury.

Scorning the smaller clusters and damning expense—like an artist—she chose a sumptuous bunch and handed the clerk a second bill. One bunch of the violets she pinned on her coat; the orchids she took out to her protégée.

"There!" She drew back and regarded Mrs. Stanley critically.

"Oh, Miss Jackson," exclaimed that astonished person, at last recovering

the power of speech, "I don't know what to say! What made—"

"I think they're just right that way," murmured Naomi.

"They—they're orchids, aren't they?" faltered Mrs. Stanley in awed accents.

Naomi nodded carelessly.

"They're wonderful with your coloring. I knew they would be," she said.

"But, oh, Miss Jackson, aren't orchids frightfully expensive?"

"They're not half as expensive as they look. That's why they're worth the price," answered Naomi, secretly delighted with the metamorphosis she had effected in her companion's appearance. The splash of rich color had truly done wonders, softening the rather too severe and somber outlines of her tailored suit and giving to her whole aspect just the note of individuality that it had lacked.

"Now you're perfect!" declared Naomi with conviction. "You'll see when we get to a mirror."

"I—I don't know what to say," repeated Mrs. Stanley. "It was wonderful of you. I never saw anything so beautiful. But— Oh, please, you wear them, and let me wear the violets!"

"But I couldn't see them then," objected Naomi.

She hesitated a moment. Ever since she had fastened the flowers on Mrs. Stanley, the latter had sat with bent head gazing down at them in awed fascination. That would not do at all.

"I never wear orchids," Naomi added with a laugh, "because I simply can't keep my eyes off them. I keep looking down at myself like a child with a new dress on, and of course that makes me look as if I weren't used to such grandeur. It's too silly, but I can't help it; they're so beautiful."

Before the speech was half finished, Mrs. Stanley's head was up, and up to stay, as erect as if held in place by a photographer's brace. Naomi was sat-

isified, doubly so, for she knew that when the head rose, by some incomprehensible law of life, the spirits rose also.

Yes, the flowers were a happy thought. Naomi congratulated herself. Once, when she had been about sixteen, a romantic neighbor had offered to teach her the flower language and she had chortled ever after at the memory. But she had learned since then that flowers can talk, especially in winter and in New York. Max Bayer couldn't guess, probably, whether Mrs. Stanley's suit had cost twenty-five dollars or a hundred and twenty-five, but he would have no doubts about the orchids, and he would appraise their wearer accordingly. And if he thought, as he'd be pretty sure to, that some man had paid for them, he'd take off his hat. That was Bayer.

The taxi stopped now, and a liveried flunkie opened the door.

"Hop out," said Naomi, when Mrs. Stanley hesitated timidly.

Naomi paid the cab fare and waved away the change with an airy hand; whereupon the chauffeur's finger rose to his cap with an alacrity that communicated itself instantly to the flunkie at the curb and to those at the door, and our two obscure and more or less impetuous heroines of the stage were floated on a wave of enthusiasm through the portals of New York's smartest hostelry.

"Oh, that's too amusing!"

The words were spoken in a high, gay, feminine staccato, which rose above the rather subdued human buzz that greeted them. Involuntarily their eyes sought the speaker, who was standing near by, a very young woman with a glowing outdoor complexion and a huge Erin-green knitting bag, the two strong notes of color giving to her tall, slim, tailored silhouette a posterlike effect. Her companions were men, one slightly older than herself, the other middle-aged.

"Bally nuisance!" said the latter ruefully.

His juniors laughed.

"Oh, Freddy, you're *too* simple!" cried the young woman. "But if she isn't coming, *what* are we waiting for?"

"Judy's right. Let's go and feed," said the younger man, and they started for the stairs that led down to the grill.

"Love may come and love may go, but a wife goes on forever," laughed Judy.

"Or if she doesn't, her alimony does," amended the younger man. "So cheer up, Freddy."

The group had almost reached the head of the steps, toward which Naomi and her companion were also headed; and suddenly, on an impulse, Naomi caught Mrs. Stanley's arm to hold her back in order that the others might pass them. It had just occurred to her that, for her purpose, she could not do better than keep "Judy" in sight, and in hearing, too, if possible. But Mrs. Stanley, not understanding, halted without stepping aside as Naomi had done, with the result that the oncoming Judy brushed against her rather sharply as she went by.

"I'm sorry," said the young woman in her high, crisp tones, and swept on without so much as a glance in acknowledgment of Mrs. Stanley's stammering "I beg your pardon."

"She's English," whispered Mrs. Stanley to Naomi. "We had an Englishman in the company last year, and he always said 'I'm sorry' instead of 'Excuse me.'"

Naomi shook her head.

"'I'm sorry' is English, but they're not," she said.

"They talk like actors."

Naomi smiled. She wished that Judy could have heard the remark, though it would not have fazed her, of course—nothing would. An absolute conviction of her own superiority was her glory and the glory of her tribe. That was

why, as an exhibit, she was for that hour priceless.

Luck stayed with Naomi. She succeeded in getting a small side table just across a narrow aisle from the one engaged and waiting for Freddy's party, and she was careful to see that Mrs. Stanley's view was unobstructed. When the food was ordered, she said:

"Do you mind if I go and phone while we're waiting? This is my matinée day, and I shall just about have time after lunch to get to the theater."

The statement was true, but the telephone messages that Naomi went off to send were not at all urgent. They were, however, a good excuse for leaving Mrs. Stanley alone—alone with her environment. So Naomi stayed away just as long as she dared, considering time limits, and when she returned, she found the waiter serving.

"Oh, *so* glad you've come! I was *awfully* tempted to begin without you!" exclaimed Mrs. Stanley, with a high-pitched vivacity that was so unlike her normal speech and so suggestive of the stranger at the next table that Naomi could have laughed out in amusement and delight. The scheme was working!

"She's married," whispered Mrs. Stanley, indicating the lively Judy with a glance. "I was *so* surprised!"

"The rich always marry young. Like the poor, they have nothing to gain by waiting," said Naomi flippantly, striving herself to catch something of Judy's crisp airiness. Not for the world would she have injured the delicate texture of Mrs. Stanley's new manner by the harsh contact of prosaic reality.

"She's married to *Freddy!* Isn't it *too* amusing? That *old* man!"

"Not *really*!"

"Yes; I'm sure. I gathered it from what they said. It's been *too* funny listening to them—just like a play. The young chap's married, too. They call him *Van*. I think he's *crazy* about

Judy—isn't it awful? And I think she likes him, too. She flirts with him right before Freddy!"

Just like a play. That was the explanation, of course, thought Naomi. Compared with the scenes of her normal experience, this charming room, unobtrusively simple, yet with every feature superlative in quality and taste, must seem to Mrs. Stanley very like a fine stage "set," and the unhurried, unharassed patrons like the perfectly costumed "extras" of a "production," in which expense had not been spared. Judy, Freddy, and Van were principals, "seated at table, left center." Judy, of course, was the star.

And Judy and her friends did talk like actors. Listening to them now, Naomi suddenly understood what Mrs. Stanley had meant. It was not only their pronunciation, it was their over-emphasis, the constant straining to make everything they said sound important or clever.

Mrs. Stanley babbled on, Naomi aiding and abetting her in every way possible. If only she could keep her like that until Bayer had seen her! She might slump afterward, doubtless would, but with her part secured, she would have some basis for self-confidence, and her ability and training as an actress would save her at rehearsals. Watching her now, Naomi felt the glow that Pygmalion must have had when Galatea's marble turned to flesh. She dreaded the end of the luncheon, fearing the return to realities.

But time passed, and the moment came when they had to leave. They took a taxi again, of course. Naomi was determined to keep up the illusion to the last possible moment; besides, she had delayed their departure until a few minutes to two, hoping to save Mrs. Stanley a long, disheartening interval in Bayer's outer office.

"I hope Bayer is on time," she said, as the taxi turned into Broadway.

Mrs. Stanley said nothing for a moment. She seemed to be thinking deeply.

"You know," she said suddenly, "I'm not going to tell him about these last few years. It'll only hurt my chances. I'm going to say that I retired from the stage when I married—that my husband wouldn't let me act, but that I had got so bored, I couldn't stand society another *minute*. That it was just *too* stupid, the eternal dinners and teas and operas!"

Naomi laughed gleefully.

"Say it like that and you'll put it over," she applauded. "Bayer has never been nearer to the real thing than he has to the animals in the zoo. He'll fall *fog* it."

Mrs. Stanley's face glowed.

"You've been so wonderful to me," she said gratefully. "I never can thank you. I feel as *different!*" She glanced down at the orchids that she wore. "Do you know, I believe it was these flowers that did it?" she said. "They make me feel as if I were—well, somebody."

"They make you look so, too."

"Yes, and they make people look *at* me!"

Naomi nodded.

"I noticed that," she said. She did not believe that the orchids alone had turned the psychological trick for her, but they had begun it, and she counted the money well spent that had paid for them.

As the taxi drew up before the building in which Bayer had his office, a distant tower clock announced the time.

"That's two o'clock!" gasped Mrs. Stanley. "Goodness, I'm late!" And with a parting word of thanks, she dashed across the sidewalk.

Then the miracle happened. In her haste, she ran into a man who was also hurrying toward the same door.

"I'm sorry!"

At the high, crisp tones, Naomi, who

had opened her purse to find the cab fare, looked up quickly, then sat riveted with intense interest. For the man was Max Bayer.

That Mrs. Stanley did not know it was evident. She rushed on, after her airy apology, with an aplomb that ignorance of the fact alone could have given her. As for Bayer, his hat came off with a jerk as he stepped aside to let her pass. He turned then and looked at the taxi—he had evidently seen her alight from it—and then for an instant stared after her. The next instant, he was following rapidly in her wake.

Naomi sank back with a weak laugh when the two had disappeared. She yielded the palm to chance. No one could have planned that, and yet it couldn't have been better. If first impressions are the vital ones, then Mrs. Stanley was as good as engaged.

The taxi dismissed, Naomi walked rapidly on to her own workshop. She could be extravagant with a light heart in a good cause, but not uselessly. Once arrived at the theater, the lateness of the hour left her no time to think until she was dressed and ready for her part. She longed then for the performance to be over, so that she could hurry home and hear Mrs. Stanley's good news. She wondered how Mr. Stanley would take it. Be furious of course, the idiot! So absorbed was Naomi in anticipation that she was almost late for an entrance. Only a wild hiss of warning from Billy Wade saved her.

As luck would have it, she did not go back to her boarding house after the matinée. Some old friends from the South who were in the audience dragged her off to their hotel for dinner and a chat. The evening performance followed, of course, and it was nearing midnight when she finally reached home.

The house was dark and silent as she crept upstairs, but she was hopeful that Mrs. Stanley would be up, listening for

her return. Surely she must understand how interested Naomi would be to know how things had gone. If they had gone well, she should herself be eager to report.

But Mrs. Stanley was apparently in bed, or out somewhere with her husband, for their room was dark. Just how was that to be interpreted? Thinking that they might come in at any moment, Naomi stopped every minute or two in the course of her undressing to listen at the door for sounds from below. But there were none, and she at last went reluctantly to bed.

The Stanleys were not in the dining room next morning, and the swift glance that she sent toward their table as she entered fell not on expectancy, but vacancy. The table was not even set. Puzzled, Naomi waited impatiently for the waitress to appear, but before she could question her, the girl spoke.

"I've got a letter for you, miss," she said, feeling in her apron pocket. "Mrs. Stanley asked me to give it to you very particular. That's why I didn't put it in your room last night. I thought, being so particular, I'd oughter give it to you myself. She give me a quarter for it."

"Has Mrs. Stanley gone away?" asked Naomi, surprised.

"Yes, ma'am. Her and her husband went last night. They got an engagement somewhere. She told me where, but—"

"Was it Canada?" gasped Naomi, seized by an awful premonition.

"I—I think it was, ma'am. She said to tell you she was awful sorry to go without saying good-by to you."

"Thank you."

Naomi took the letter and stared down at her name written in pencil on the envelope. She was intensely disappointed.

The letter was a hasty scrawl on a single sheet of paper, begun evidently

as a brief word of explanation, but, under the pressure of feeling, lengthening into a wail:

MY DEAREST MISS JACKSON: I don't know what you will think. I just hate to tell you. But I'm going to Canada with Rex to play in stock. We have to leave right away. I wish you had come home to dinner. But then it wouldn't have made any difference, I guess. Rex is so strong-willed. But of course I wouldn't want him to be weak. No woman would, would she? It seems awful. I feel as if I'd die.

I got the engagement with Bayer. It wasn't that. He came into the office right after me and saw me at once, though there were others waiting that were there first. He didn't see them at all. He sent them away after he saw me. He said I was just what he was looking for—that anybody could see I was the real thing. You see, I had told him what I said I was going to about being bored with society. I was to go back and sign my contract to-morrow morning. I could die when I think of it now.

But Rex went on so and did not believe a word I said. He said I had some man helping me, somebody with a pull that had fixed it with Bayer, and if that was the sort of girl I was, he wouldn't wipe his feet on me, let alone live with me.

Oh, Miss Jackson, it was the orchids! When I told Rex it was you that bought them for me, he said, if I couldn't lie any better than that, I ought to stick to the truth. I said he could ask you when you came home and he said any woman would lie to help another woman fool a man.

Now you mustn't think I blame you, Miss Jackson. I know you meant well. And the lunch was lovely. If only it hadn't been for the orchids, I think I could have talked Rex into letting me take the engagement. But I don't blame you, of course. Your sincere friend,

CORALIE STANLEY.

Naomi folded the letter and replaced it in the envelope. Her emotions were mixed. And it is only the truth to state that they were not entirely free from a rueful recollection of the market price of orchids.

"Billy," she said that night at the theater to young Wade, "do you believe that one woman would buy another woman a bunch of orchids?"

"Well, she'd be an awful fool if she did," said Wade.

Naomi laughed dryly.

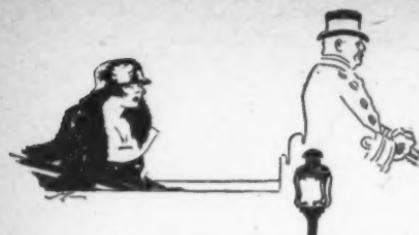
"That's the answer," she said. "You may go to the head of the class."



THE CHILD'S MOTHER

WHO was with her all the time, a child,
Remember now just how she spent the days.
The names of flowers in the garden ways
She said were little live things, winged and wild,
Which hovered just above—for she loved words.
Inside, the house was quiet when she sewed;
Around her in the room the silence flowed.
Her hands were warm and quick, like quiet birds.
The flickering candles in her looking-glass
Widened her eyes to pools of wonder deep.
Once in my father's arms I saw her weep.
And sometimes she came running, on the grass.
Now I hear fragments of a song she sung,
But then I never knew that she was young.

LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL.



His Exotic

By **Rebecca Hooper Eastman**

PART II.

STEPHEN found Yvonne seated on the colonial sofa, with her rosy draperies falling about her in her studiedly careless way.

"What a frightfully stiff room!" she began, in a superior tone. "I hope the rest of the house isn't like it."

"This is meant to be a formal room, Yvonne."

"I understand that. But I hate the old-colonial sort of formality."

"I rather admire it, myself."

She surveyed him with detached curiosity, as if she wondered how he was going to behave. There wasn't a chance for him! But he surprised her by taking the offensive.

"I suppose you know that this sort of thing can't go on?" he observed.

"That's why I came. I think of you daytimes, and I lie awake, and think of you at night. I could tell, the other night in New York, that you still cared, because you didn't dare look at me. And knowing that you care, and that I—care, more than I supposed I had it in me to care—these two things made it possible for me to come. If you hated me, I couldn't have demeaned myself. But the knowledge that, insensibly, you *do* love me has made my coming the most natural thing in the world—in fact, the only thing in the world."

"Your coming is unbearable."

Eleanor Geer was a brief and blessed vision of what might have been.

"It's not my coming, it's the situ-

ation that is unbearable. And that's why it must end to-night."

"You always forget that it ended long ago."

"It can never end—except in one way."

"It can never end—in that way. It's extraordinary that you have no pride."

"Of course I have no pride—when it comes to standing idly by and letting you marry Miss Geer."

He couldn't very well put her out bodily, as she deserved, and the only other way to make her go was to try to shame her into common sense.

"You have such good taste in the matter of personal adornment that it seems as if you must have the rudiments of that other sort of taste which would show you that your following me here is the most frightful taste in the world."

"Are you actually orating about—good taste, when the whole of our future happiness is in the balance?"

"It might truly be said that there can be no lasting happiness without good taste. There are times and places for everything, and Miss Geer's house is not the place for you."

"Miss Geer and Miss Geer's house mean nothing to me—if they are in my way. The only possible way for me to make anything of my life is by remarrying you. If you don't care enough about me to help me to that extent, I can't bother about myself at all. The struggle isn't worth it. I've

tried and I know. Heavens, how frightfully bored I've been! I've either got to have happiness with you, Stephen, or—excitement—with some one else. I decline absolutely a clean conscience and—boredom."

"Boredom is the penalty of your previous lack of good taste."

"You're mad on the subject of good taste!"

"I suppose I am. I suppose I like being mad on the subject."

"It really comes down to the fact that you prefer to cling to an abstract quality rather than to help me."

"I do."

"You can't say that I haven't given you a chance to save me."

"No."

"I don't love Leon Partington. I never did. But I'm going to marry him because he won't let me have time to be bored. He's a whirlwind—a wild, restless, elemental force. He sweeps one along like a hurricane. He leaves you no time to think!"

"You're insane to marry Partington."

"You force me to it, my dear."

Stephen started to speak, and then changed his mind.

"What were you going to say?" asked Yvonne sharply.

"Only another remark about good taste."

"Please say it. I'll try to understand, this time."

He saw that she was, for the moment, more perplexed than perverse.

"It's only that if you were sincere about our coming together again, you wouldn't have had a counter-proposition to marry Partington—up your sleeve."

"I had to have some sort of refuge. Oh, how I hate this arguing! I can't stand any more of it! I'm going! And if you let me go this time, it will be forever."

"Your going forever began when you

allowed Partington to make love to you."

She adjusted the sash of her gown; she felt anxiously to see if her hair was disarranged and frowned as she saw that the toe of her new little patent-leather slipper had dared to crack. Then, unexpectedly, she came up to Stephen, threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him as she never had seemed to have it in her to kiss him in bygone days. It all happened so quickly that he had scarcely realized it when she wrenches herself away from him and ran quickly out of the house. Yvonne had always moved noiselessly; he never remembered hearing her close a door; she did everything gently. But now, as if all the impatience of years was suddenly let loose, she slammed the door of the Dream House with all her strength. It was not Yvonne, the delicate, dreamy dilettante of the affections, who left the house; it was a primitive woman.

As he stood there with the sound of the door crashing through him, Stephen realized that his cheek was wet in the place where Yvonne had touched it. She had always hated to cry; she had systematically avoided crying.

"I have a frightful feeling that she needs me," he thought uncomfortably.

He went out of the Dream House and paced up and down the terrace, regardless of time. In fact, he couldn't possibly have told whether it was minutes or hours later when he saw Eleanor coming toward him.

"I don't want to intrude," she said. "I just wanted to say good night."

"Are you tired?"

"Not specially. But I thought you'd rather be alone, and that you'd feel more at ease if you knew that we had all disappeared for the night."

In the dimness of the terrace, her leaf-green gown was changed to black, against which her collar and cuffs were even whiter than before. It was as if

she were dressed in mourning. She seemed pale, but that was probably due to the lack of light. Her bright hair looked black, and it fused with the darkness.

"Do you mind staying—and talking?" he asked.

"I'd like to—if you want me."

They sat down together in the sympathetic silence of the rose garden.

"Does it ever seem to you that the older one grows, the less one understands of life?" he began blunderingly.

"Of course that's true," said Eleanor. "About all we know definitely is that each of us has his small allotted share of sweetness, and that the curtain is then rung down, finally, on *that* part of life."

"If I had never seen Yvonne, you and I might have found a lasting sweetness. The curtain might not have fallen on *us*."

"But this is life, Stephen, and you *did* see Yvonne. And you have Phyllis."

"She's all sweetness. More than I deserve."

"Not that, Stephen, ever. You deserve—everything!" She spoke with passionate conviction. And then she asked, "Was it very awful—seeing Yvonne?"

"About as awful as it could be."

"I thought so, when I heard the door slam. Do you know, Stephen, I don't ever remember hearing the door of the Dream House slam—before? It did something to me. Of course I was excited, anyway."

"Yvonne believes that her salvation rests entirely with me. It doesn't, you know. Why, it's as old as the hills—the fact that every fellow must work out his own salvation. It's the one thing that can't be done vicariously. But she somehow succeeded in making me feel, for the first time, that I'm still responsible to her because I'm the only person she cares about. I'm the only

chance she has left. And since she has gone, I've come to feel that I *mustn't*, for my own peace of mind, neglect her. I have a feeling that there is no such thing as a divorce. Yvonne has put things on a basis where the usual laws are meaningless. Whether or not it is within my power to save her, I've come to the conclusion that it's my business to try."

Stephen, who paused in the attempt to find words that would better express his conviction, found that there was something about the quality of Eleanor's silence that made it impossible for him to continue. And yet it was a dreadful sort of silence that *mustn't* go on. He couldn't endure it.

"Please, Eleanor!" he entreated.

"Just let me have my selfish minute of you, Stephen," she said. "It seems, momentarily, as if everything I had built up with such infinite care had just been shattered by relentlessly cruel hands. I'll get over this presently, and I'll get over it quicker, *this* time, if I can say it. I managed giving you up the other time all right, didn't I? But it's harder now, because I'm older and find, rather unexpectedly, that things mean more. I used to think that people over thirty were too old to feel things much."

While she was talking, he felt, rather than saw, that the fingers of her tightly closed hands worked spasmodically. As soon as she stopped talking, she unlocked her fingers and absently pushed back the hair which she had brought so becomingly low on her forehead.

"Yvonne has great power over you, Stephen."

"She has no power over me at all!"

"Yvonne has great power over you because she needs you. And I have no power at all—because I don't need you."

"No—I need you."

"If I needed you, Stephen, it would

be impossible for you to take Yvonne back. I only want you, unspeakably."

"As I want you."

"Sometimes I think, Stephen, that it doesn't make any difference at all—whom a man marries. I happen to be your real mate. I know it and I've always known it. A thousand Yvones can't change that. It's the one permanent, blessed fact. And you realized it in its fullness—only this evening."

As they sat there in the solemn hush of the evening, it seemed as if no earthly misunderstanding or heavenly power could separate them, because they were meant to be together. Their love had no need of physical assurance, because, at that surpassing moment, without even so much as a handclasp, they permeated each other's souls. They knew that nothing could divide them again—ever. They were as sure of each other as if they had spent their lives together. They parted triumphantly—without having so much as touched each other's fingers. Their human love was so transcendent that it became like the love of God—immutable, and purer than themselves.

Stephen left Phyllis at the Dream House and followed Yvonne back to town, only an hour and a half after her departure. If Eleanor had been able to dream her house in ten minutes, an hour and a half was more than enough to find a timeless love. What was it—about being "changed in the twinkling of an eye?"

Yvonne was not at her hotel; her things were there, but she had not come in. When Stephen called up Leon Partington's apartment, he, too, was out. With a joyous sense that he would never feel soul-fagged again, Stephen went into the smoking room and took a seat that gave a full view of the front door. Here he waited until two o'clock in the morning, when Yvonne came in. She looked unusually little,

and half dragged her feet, like a worn-out child. She made no movement of surprise when she saw Stephen coming to meet her, for the reason that she was, emotionally, too threadbare to be surprised at anything.

"I was going to write to you," she said colorlessly. "Leon Partington doesn't want me—any more than the rest."

"Yvonne!"

"The whole world seems bent on convincing me that I don't exist. But I'm too tired to realize the void."

"Yvonne!"

"Yes."

"I'm staying at my club to-night. In the morning, I shall have something to tell you. You're too tired to hear it now."

"Yes. I shouldn't understand—whatever it was. Words sound all right, but they don't mean anything."

"I'll call for you at eleven. We'll have breakfast at Sherry's."

She was too worn to show any surprise that he was willing to be seen with her. She went to the desk for her room key, and dragged herself into the elevator without realizing that she hadn't said good night.

The number and beauty of Yvonne's frocks had always been one of her potent weapons. In the morning, however, the battle being over, she discarded all the glory of her war paint and, with an utter lack of her innate coquetry, met Stephen in the same gown that she had worn the previous night. The iridescence of her beauty seemed to have faded.

Her morning cup of chocolate revived her so noticeably that Stephen inquired when she had last eaten. She didn't know; she hadn't had any appetite—for days. At first, when he asked her to marry him, she didn't seem to comprehend.

"You're going to give up Eleanor

Geer a second time—for me?" And across her tired face went a convulsive look of disbelief. "I didn't suppose, even when I hoped the hardest, that even you could be as good as that." And she added, in an almost inaudible tone, "I love you, supremely."

Just then a rather prepossessing man came and seated himself at the next table, and, at the sight of him, Yvonne suddenly gazed down at her crumpled gown.

"I must throw this old rag away," she said. But when she noted the apprehension on Stephen's face, she blushed deeply. "Stephen, please! I was only thinking that I didn't look fit to be seen with you."

The blush faded, but the color seemed to return to her hair, her eyes, and her lips. She became beautiful again.

There were no letters of any sort written to Stephen after his marriage with Yvonne except the inevitable pair, Mrs. Worthing wrote, despairingly:

DEAR STEPHEN: It has just occurred to me that people marry people whom they wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole—except to marry. This illogical logic makes it possible for me to send you good wishes for your inexplicable deed. Faithfully,

JANE WORTHING.

And Hilary wrote:

DEAR STEVE: Being something of a psychologist and a good deal of a meddler, I couldn't resist going out to call on Eleanor Geer the day after your second marriage. To my astonishment, I found her looking rather triumphantly handsome. At the mention of your name, she turned positively beatific. I hear that Yvonne has the same expression.

It looks as if, in spite of your craziness, you had done the right thing. Respectfully,

HILARY.

THE END.



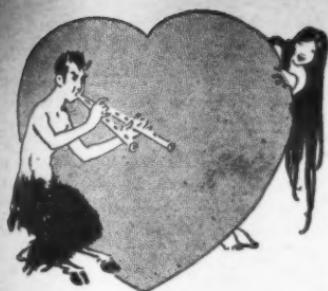
THE LADY DREAMS

I AM half sick of shadows," sighed Shalott.
And I of chill, safe, unrelenting days,
Patterned as trigly as a lilac leaf;
A life as sober sweet as lilac; praise
For arid goodness—I, by sin forgot,
Of all the world one still house for my fief.

I want midsummer meadows, lush with scent,
Green-girdled; meadows lit with lily-flame
And warmed with that great golden rose, the sun,
Glad vales of Tempe, echoing great Pan's name;
I want frank, riotous beauty, curved and blent
To make earth bloom and life's pulse swifter run.

All that's wild and lovely—free—
All my walls have hid from me—
Flower and sun and singing wind,
Love—I dream that I may find!
Lordly love, I dream, disdains
My pale life's well-ordered chains,
Scarlet lilies sets abloom
In my heart's close-curtained room.

MARGUERITE MOERS MARSHALL.



The Voice In the Violin

By Bonnie Ginger

Author of "That Morbid Whale,"
"The Male Mandrill," etc.

RAE had ended the fairy tale, and Mrs. John had sent the children up to bed. John took up his paper again, but not to read it, for he was staring down at Rae on the rug. So was Barnard Walcott, who sat by the table.

Not from admiration of this tableau did Mrs. John hover on its outskirts. Indeed, she meant to disrupt it. Her delay was due to an anxiety which she now—and dead against her judgment—voiced:

"I don't know about fairy stories. They say children should learn nature—cocoons and bees and crystals—just the natural world, which is the true world—"

"But, Lucy," her husband objected, "all that stuff kills the imagination. No, no, the fairy stuff's all right."

Mrs. John wondered why Barnard Walcott suddenly laughed. But Rae broke in eagerly, her glinting eyes up-raised.

"I understand, Lucy—our telling kids things we seem to have to untell them afterward. But it's not really lying."

"Saying a thing is something it isn't isn't lying?"

"But no, dear. It used to worry me, too, till I cleared it up. I mean, how everything in all the world changes into something else—beggars into princes, pumpkins into coaches— Why, it's exactly the same as seeds into flowers. Of course it is."

"That's so," Barnard Walcott broke

in, and though he spoke casually, from a position of detachment, he suddenly seemed to occupy one of almost eager participation. "Changings, changings of beggars into princes and pumpkins into coaches. Yet there's the other phase of all that, too, though it isn't evidently so popular or so well developed. I mean the changings back—princes into beggars, coaches into pumpkins—"

"Oh, when the spell's off," said John. "No. Or, rather, is it off? That's just the question."

"What do you mean?" John asked bluntly.

Barnard laughed.

"If the toad is a latent swan, isn't the swan a possible or even an imminent toad? And shouldn't the dazzling prince tremble for fear he may be only a mouse?"

Mrs. John was beguiled into argument.

"But it's always a fairy godmother or a bad genie that turns things into other things. And it isn't a real change usually—it's just an appearance."

Rae's eyes had been glinting again.

"I know what Bar means. He means duality."

"Oh, Jekyll and Hyde," said John, reassured. "But that wasn't fairy stuff, and the fellow did his own changing—until it got away from him."

It was the word "duality" that brought Mrs. John to her senses. She at once went away. From the nursery

upstairs she must summon her husband. He must be abstracted from that discussion. He oughtn't to wait to be abstracted, but since he chose to be obtuse! She ascended with a firm tread.

In short, the cottage harbored a situation, which was this:

A week before, Rae, Mrs. John's sister, through with teaching and with California, had brought her fiddle here to the Jersey shore to stay the summer. And this morning Barnard Walcott, ready, surely, to stop roaming about and exploring, had come down from the Maine coast, and now the interminable engagement would end—it was to be hoped!—in a wedding date. Mrs. John was the keener for it because, until last week, she had doubted whether there would ever be any wedding, for she had not believed that the two were in love.

Rae's letters home had never sounded "in love." Even John had said it looked as if she cared more for her fiddle than for her fiancé. As for Barnard, he traveled the world, contenting himself with a brief yearly visit to California. What sort of an affair was that? After all, there's such a thing as sentiment.

Once she had written to Rae: "If you don't care for each other, why go on? You were a mere child at the time, and even though it did please father and Doctor Walcott, they'd never have wanted you to be engaged if you didn't care, or to marry now if you've stopped caring."

To which the girl had answered: "Don't bother, dear. I'm just trying to cultivate a little character first. It seems like a sort of decent first duty to one's future mate. I'm growing a little; that's all."

But now—behold! Rae was at home, and for a week she had given daily, if unconscious, evidence of being in love at last. It might have happened last fall, when Bar had spent two full weeks with her. Anyhow, to-night there was nothing logical to do but set a date—

and why weren't they out in the moonlight doing it? There were the river shore and the river itself, the lane, the road to the beach, the beach—

Going to the landing presently, she called down to John. But he didn't come up. Rather abruptly, then, she tucked in the last of the three kiddies and came very firmly downstairs again. At once a groan escaped her.

Discussion—oh, yes! There was Bar, his long body settled in his chair as if to stay there all evening, and the first word she heard was the same "duality," irrelevant term! If they had talked of something really important!

"This fancying you're something pretty fine," he was saying, "and then feeling yourself falling kerplump to hard earth—and a twist of the wrist will do it, you know."

"Yes, I know," Rae almost whispered.

"To speak of only the lightest of my own shortcomings," he added, "there was my early temper. I hated it because my father was so dignified. I was lazy as the devil, too—but a fellow I enormously admired had such scorn of laziness that I really strove to overcome it, just to be like him. Then, in the first year at college, I got in with a fast gang, but a prof came along who roused my sense of decency, and I copied him through all the remaining years of school. Then I met an outside crowd, and flop! went all my hard-won decency. The swan reverted to the toad stage."

Rae laughed aloud.

"Oh, these bruises from the flops! I've been black and blue! It was manners first, with *me*. Lucy, you know what a rude child I was. Yet I believed in manners, and there was a little girl I'd have given my ears to resemble, and at times I did resemble her. I worked so hard to be like her. But all at once, the lofty ground would cave in, and down I would be at the

bottom of the hill again. And I used to be jealous. Oh, no one will ever know how I toiled to rid myself of that hideous blemish! But it's always been that way, I think. I was always busy building up a fine character, and all at once a test would come, and off would drop the cloak I'd got to thinking was my own skin, and there I would be, the miserable thing I'd been at the beginning. Even the *years* of pretense slipped off with the rest, as if the nobleness had been a sort of trance."

Barnard nodded.

"And I remember a fellow at college—a chap from some raw place out West, all rough edges and queer touchinesses, but terribly decent, too, honest and kind and ambitious—yes, ambitious in the best sense. That fellow deliberately and laboriously set out to turn himself into a higher species. He must have come from some pretty rough stock; but, after all, he had the right idea. Like you, Rae, he believed in manners; he thought them a social duty. And the queer thing was he wasn't a bounder, and no one laughed at him. He just said, 'These are the right things to get in life, because they give you equipment for work,' and he was right.

"But once or twice during the first years, things came up that tested him a little too sharply, and it was a queer revelation then. You could see in a glance the stock he'd come from. You saw his origins. He was common and truculent, and he used phrases and accents— He astounded certain people. But even then there was something fine in the way he discarded the old self immediately and got back all he'd won and went ahead. Probably he believed that if you stick long enough to a new self, it becomes the real self, and, anyhow, that's evolution."

"It is, it *is*!" exclaimed Rae. "He was dead right!"

Mrs. John had by now reached a state of utter desperation, but whatever steps

she might have taken to intervene will not be known, for the discussion was broken off by an outside agency.

A boy came to the porch door with a telegram. It was for Bar.

Bar read the message and turned quickly to the doorway, as if he would have gone out. Then he checked himself.

"No answer," he said, and the boy left.

"Nothing bad?" John proffered.

Bar smiled.

"No, just some—business."

He sauntered to the door again, and this time he went out on the porch.

Rae had risen from the rug.

"I've positively forgotten!" and she ran up to the nursery for the belated good-night kisses. She was devoted to the three kiddies.

"John," said Mrs. John immediately, "do you comprehend that we've got to give those two a chance to be alone?"

John was apologetic at once. His wife's tone moderated.

"Well, then, do trot upstairs, and do stay there till she's come down. Then, surely, they'll go off for a walk." She herself went to the kitchen, leaving the road to romance definitely clear.

But Rae did not come down at once.

Bar, meantime, paced the veranda, grateful for its vine-traced shadows.

His telegram had read:

No word from you. Am waiting.

L. L. G.

"L. L. G." was Laura Liscard Gale, wife of the artist, Gran Gale.

Barnard had come down to Rae, not to ask her to name their wedding date, but to ask her to release him from the engagement. Three days ago, he had decided this thing. This was when he knew that he loved Laura Gale.

They had been in Maine.

"But are you sure? She hasn't told you so."

"Laura, it was only a youngster af-

fair, and because our governors were so delighted, Rae has stuck to it as a sort of promise. She's rather quixotic about those things. But if she cared for me, why should she have put it off so long?"

"But why didn't she free you if she didn't care?"

"No, Laura, it's her loyalty. Besides, she's fond of me just as I'm fond of her. Why, even her letters were just pal letters."

So he had argued. And now—

Oh, Rae!

He had seen it when she had met him at the station. He had seen it all. Impossible to be mistaken. She expected him to want her to set the day. She wanted him to want it. She cared.

When Mrs. Gale had sent the message, she hadn't known—thank Heaven!—how, on his way down from Maine, he had spent the whole of yesterday in New York. But what was yesterday's cowardice to to-day's?

If he had had any indication of the change in Rae! And it had all happened since last fall. She hadn't been like this when he had left her; or, at least, if the change had been taking place, he hadn't seen. She had seemed just the old Rae, the old comrade. Ah, that was why it was so unescapable now; she was now so different!

And not only with him, but within herself. All afternoon, he had been seeing, as in a nightmare, this unfolding of a woman he had never seen before, a glowing woman of new meanings and charms—charms he knew were potent; and he had been filling gradually with a resentment of her which had finally flared to rage, now that the moment of the ordeal was practically upon him.

He knew that he was unjust. She was not trying to show him her heart; she was trying even to hide it until he should speak. She meant to be fair. But she had always been frank, too.

Why hadn't she let him know in her letters? Why, in God's world, had she put them all in this hideous, ghastly hole?

Away down under this reason for his rage was another, but he hadn't discovered it. But beside the dread of what he had to do—now so almost impossible—was a deep-down, vague expectancy, and, unconsciously, he was shrinking, not only from what he had to do to her, but from what she might somehow do to him. He did not know this. He knew only that he loved Laura Gale and that he was horribly near to hating this girl Rae.

II.

He hardly knew how it came about, but a little later they were walking together along the moonlit river shore. She was chatting, and so carelessly that he thought he might have imagined that rich breathlessness with which she had said, "Yes, it would be nice to walk." As they went, he more than once glanced down at her furtively, noting her bright, bare head, her strong, supple body in its free gown, her pliant hands. His resentment flared again. He said stilted things.

They came to some boats upturned in a cove, and she suggested sitting there.

"I've played with the kids till I'm frayed out."

"You look particularly fresh." He wondered why he said that. "See here," he added hastily, "you've told me so little about yourself—your last year out there. It evidently agreed?"

"It did, Bar. But it was such a different year."

"You seem to be thinking of jolly things."

"Yes, there were jolly things."

"Tell me about them, then."

She laughed.

"Of course it was a new place, and interesting. Exploring's in my blood,

too, Bar. Half the time I was in Frisco, and somehow such a bully crowd got together. We did things."

"Yes?"

"Well, you must remember I have temperament—the sort that can get one into scrapes." She settled back against the boat hull, and made her selection of a "scrape."

A little later, Bar was asking himself if this were Rae Dennison, this girl zestily tracing spicy adventures and vivid local color and a whole procession of bohemian men and women, especially men. Again his heart leaped in hope. He turned directly toward her.

If she had really grown into this Rae—no wonder it had been a different year. In the old Rae, there had always been a touch of the—well, the too fastidious. There are appeals a woman can legitimately make which that Rae had used to reject. It was not lack of the woman power, but a sort of unnecessary dispensing with it. Sex appeal? Yes, she had been too aloof from it. But now it was as if the sunny land had warmed her to its own blood heat, and he saw the difference. Any man would have seen it; any man would have felt it. Even her humor was broader. Nor did he remember that her voice had been so rich, so magnetic.

Meantime the shallow river flowed idly past. Down at the distant inlet, the breakers gleamed and boomed. At times a car purred on the beach road. Once it was not a pur, but a ripping sound, as a machine tore past in needless haste.

As she talked, she constantly gestured with her wonderful hands, and once her bare arm touched him as she made a descriptive sweep. When he realized the thrill that touch had given him, he almost cried aloud, "No, no!" as if a gulf yawned into which she might plunge the three of them. And yet his backward step from its edge was lagging and mesmerized, as in a dream.

"But," she said in a changed tone at last, "here I gabble of my little doings, and all the time I want to hear of your big life—your trip, the adventures—Your letters simply made me greedy for more, and you said you'd tell me some day."

He was bewildered and needing time. Her demand for his adventures seemed to give him ground to stand on till he could find a way to say what must be said. She pressed that demand.

"You're to write a book. It will tell things, too, but, Bar—how can I wait for that?"

To gain time—time! He could think out how to approach this crisis while he gabbed of the crises of the past.

He began to tell her of his trip. He floundered at first, but her bright interest steadied him, and, after all, he had once pictured himself telling her just these things. Soon the telling was making him relive what he told, and if in doing so he forgot everything else for the time, there was another reason, though he did not know it.

The fact was a part of him was suddenly freed which had been in abeyance for a month and more—that is, since he had met Laura Gale. Laura, too, had been interested—true—had marveled and admired and shuddered, but always from her nest in the deck chair—they had met coming over—or the cushions of her hammock under her own trees up there in Maine, or from under her parasol on the sands, or amid the teacups in her boudoir. But now he felt, without knowing it, the difference there can be in listening.

In fact, Rae was not listening; she was taking the trip with him. Yes, she was sharing that last perilous voyage. She had his fever; with a laugh she, too, dressed her own wound, and rode the unknown rapids beside him, and threaded the forests, and outwitted the natives, and slew the beasts—always

just a pace behind him and trusting to his leadership, but she was there. She satisfied that sharp longing the explorer has for some understanding companion to see and feel what he sees and feels. To tell her was to show her. And when he climbed the mountain that had lured him for weeks, she climbed in his steps, with his help, and from the summit she enjoyed with him the view and the victory. And those victories were the supreme things in his life.

A picture flashed over him of her being with him, bodily with him; in his next expedition. It was vivid, and it struck him speechless, indeed thoughtless.

With Laura, he wanted nothing but Laura. But this girl revealed to him his irrevocable passion—the passion for the Unknown, the Untrodden; and that same passion was in her own heart. She understood and she wanted the things he wanted and the people and the places. She loved his sort of life.

He stared at her. She was leaning forward, the moonlight full on her face.

And then it came to him that what had made her like this was love. A man thrill shot through him, and at the same time a thought came, flashing into justification, yes, into unanswerable argument—that, after all, she accounted him her lover; that, after all, *they were engaged!*

He took her hand.

"Rae?" he said, scarcely articulate.

There was a silence, and then she said low, and without turning to him, "Yes?" That "yes" vibrated like a cello note.

If she had made a responsive movement, it might have stopped him, brought him to himself, but she was quite still.

"Rae, you'd go with me into those places, wouldn't you?"

She nodded slowly. After a long minute, she turned to him.

Then she was in his arms.

"I was afraid," she was saying later, "afraid it wasn't real. Real with *me*. We've been so separated, and somehow there had been other men who— I never mentioned them to you last year, but there were some—only one here and there!"

"And since last year?" he asked.

"Oh, no! I don't think I quite understood until you'd gone, but when I realized—oh, you couldn't have been replaced for a minute, a second! There, that's how modest I am!"

He had been keeping down the thoughts whirling in the background.

"She loves me, and we were engaged. It had to be!" He clung to that extenuation.

On her side, Rae, after that one moment of complete yielding, grew elusive. Only her words were bold, extravagant. She seemed to want to talk. He was glad of that; he was not ready yet for demonstration. At the same time, it struck him that her shyness was not the old drawing away from emotions she didn't understand; she did understand now, only too well.

He was to learn how little he comprehended the heart and mind of this woman beside him.

She surprised him first by suggesting their return to the house. The hour was rather late for the country. She slipped her hand into his, and they walked back in silence. He tried not to feel the sag of his knees as the distance shortened.

Late as it was, John was hammering in the kitchen, where Mrs. John was also busy. She called to the two as they entered.

"I guess it's happened," she whispered to John. "But don't say a word. Let it come from them."

Bar seemed to say something to Rae, and her tremulous laugh answered. Then Bar brought her to the kitchen.

"Too busy to hear something in here?"

"Rae!" cried Mrs. John, and she ran to her sister.

"What's all this, now?" John grumbled hopefully.

"I guess we want your blessing, John," said Bar.

It surprised Mrs. John that Rae escaped presently upstairs. Following, she found her sister half sobbing, half laughing.

"Why, Rae, what is it? This isn't a bit like you——"

"I know it isn't, I know. But let me do it. I have to."

"Of course, dear. Well, well, so you've set the day?"

"Day?" said Rae quickly. "No, no—we didn't set any day. That's nothing, is it?"

"But, Rae, do have it soon, please do!"

Rae sat up. She was a little pale. And she also asked to be left alone for a few minutes. She would come downstairs directly. Mrs. John descended, but she was frowning slightly. In the living room she passed Bar, and she thought that he, too, was rather pale. He jerked around toward her.

"Lucy, will you tell Rae I've gone to the station to telegraph?"

"Oh, then it did have to be answered?"

He nodded and went. Immediately Mrs. John saw to it that her husband put away the work he had been doing.

"They'll want to talk things over. You see, they *haven't* set a day, after all."

Consequently, when Rae, later, came down to the living room, it was deserted. She stood at the door, watching the river. All at once an impulse mastered her. She got out her violin and began to play.

Bar sent no telegram. There was none to send.

He did not know how long he lingered on the road, and it was not from

the desire to think. He simply couldn't go back to the house and face John and Lucy. Cowardice, and treachery to Laura Gale, and blatant self-justification, and insistent reiteration that somehow, after all, he could and would love this marvelous girl——

But what was it that had come over him? Passion? For *Rae*? And yet what else? Lord, she had been alluring! Had she known how alluring? And yet why not, when she had the right, because they were engaged?

At length he did turn toward the house. From the road he saw the light in the front bedroom and John and Lucy moving about before they pulled down the blinds. Then, coming to the shore side of the house, he heard the soft strains of the violin. He stopped halfway to the porch. Later, he slipped toward the steps, where he sat as noiselessly as he could, and listened.

His music love was intermittent. Sometimes he craved music; sometimes, when he was not thinking of it, chance threw it in his way, and then he wondered how he had done so long without it. It was that way to-night.

"My Lord—she can *play*!"

When the notes ceased, he called softly:

"I'm out here listening, Rae."

"I knew, Bar." And she began another air, exquisite, spiritual.

Here was a gift, then, that must not be hurt. The unanswered telegram no longer burned so shamefully in his pocket. He hardly thought of Laura Gale.

Rae played once more. Then she came to the threshold. Her figure there in the doorway, the lax hanging of her bare arms—even of her skilled fingers—sent through him a thrill he had never felt before. He was humble when he took her hands.

"I'm going to say good night." She smiled down at him. Her eyes were full of wonderful glinting lights.

He said nothing. He kissed her hands.

III.

Mrs. John had a prompt breakfast next morning, as John had to make a business trip, but only he and small Johnnie and little Martha came to table.

"Go on the porch and call Jeff, John. It doesn't matter about Rae and Bar. They've gone off somewhere."

"No, mother," piped Martha. "Uncle Bar and Jeff went on the river swimmin'. Auntie Rae—"

At that moment, Rae came in at the back door, her arms laden with wild flowers. The two kiddies ran to her, clamorous for kisses.

There was a glow in her eyes so luminous that even John noticed and thought, "This is what love does." He did not see, as his wife did, that Rae was pale, and also that she ate almost no breakfast, though she talked incessantly.

John finished his coffee and finally departed, and still Barnard and young Jeff had not appeared. But they came soon after, Jeff running up the path from the river.

Mrs. John immediately supervised the situation.

"Rae dear, will you wait on them? And, Johnnie and Martha, come with me on the porch for lessons, and then you can go down to the water."

She bore off the kiddies to the porch. From there she could hear the three in the dining room, Rae laughing, Bar talking volubly, and both evidently paying assiduous court to Jeff.

"All lovers are self-conscious," she reflected.

But soon Jeff abandoned them for the river and his beloved dory. The conversation inside lagged. Presently the pair set out for a walk. Mrs. John's smile followed them.

"Shall it be lane or fields or the sea, Bar?"

"How about the sea?" he replied. They turned beachward, a mile's walk over the marshes.

The low dunes hid the breakers, but not the ships beyond. One of these was a six-master. Rae exclaimed at it.

"Now one sees why they call ships 'gallant.' It must *feel* its adventure—the magnificent hazard of its voyage." She began to hum "Mandalay."

How exuberant she was! He gazed at the ship, which annoyed him. "Feel its adventure"—and he felt craven despair! But she wasn't noticing; she was just talking, chatting.

She turned to him suddenly.

"Bar, I've been thinking over what we talked about last night—about our trying to change into other things and selves."

"Oh, that stuff!" he said sharply.

She looked at him.

"Stuff? No, not stuff. What's the matter?" He had laughed irritably.

"One doesn't feel metaphysical in the morning, Rae."

"I'm not thinking of metaphysics. I felt quite practical."

"Yes?"

He tried to sound responsive. She walked on silently.

"I wonder," she said finally, "if Lucy isn't right—that fairy stuff isn't modern. Ought we to tell the kiddies it's themselves who change themselves into things—swans or toads?"

"Maybe you've been studying these ideas?" he ventured.

"Then I'll confess—yes. Books. There's even a phrase I can remember from my favorite—May I say it?"

"By all means, let's have it."

"We are masters of our thoughts. We can pull up the weeds, and can even destroy that portion of the ground that bore them."

"I see. That eliminates the fairy godmother."

"Quite. It gives *us* the job. There's a Dunsany story about a king who dis-

pleased the gods; and, to punish him, they decreed that he should cease to have ever existed; and so it came to pass that he had never existed. But it's no use trying to do the impossible. It's no use our trying to be gods."

Even yet it did not strike him that she was saying all this to lead up to something. "I wish she'd chuck these abstractions," he thought. He was too miserable; he felt too unalterably one craven and angry self, writhing because of the present and furious and impotent in the face of the future. His resentment was hot again. Now, in the clear light of day, he asked what insanity had mastered him last night. Oh, the weakness and madness of last night! Just because a girl was fair, or super-fair, in the moonlight—because she hung on his words, flattered him with eager, starry eyes—

And now the nightmare of this morning! And what a consummate hypocrite he must be, that she saw nothing amiss!

They crossed a bridge where, all along the railing, people leaned, dangling crab lines and chattering. On all the little backwater channels were dories with other crabbers. Rae watched them, smiling.

"They're really dears, don't you think? They're so jolly happy!"

Irritated, he looked at her rather sharply. Then he looked more thoughtfully. Yes, she was lovely. Oh, she was everything she had been last night, as fair in the sunlight as in the moonlight—but now he did not want her. He did not want her!

At dawn, when he had waked from a short sleep, the reaction had set in, and ever since then he had been trying to find some less dastardly way of saving them both from his horrible blunder. But so far he had only blundered again, by letting her think the telegram had brought business tidings. Deceit already!

"In fact," she went on unexpectedly—they were now on the narrow marsh road—"probably we oughtn't to bother at all about changing into other somethings, but just try to polish up what we already are. I dare say that's it."

He said nothing. At last she turned to him.

"Bar, don't you see what I'm trying to say? Is it possible you don't understand?"

Now it did dawn on him that she wasn't just babbling abstractions. And why did she lay her hand on his arm? Why was she so pale? Why did she smile so queerly, as if it hurt a little?

"What do you mean?"

"Why, I think," she said softly, "that something is being hard for you—harder than it ought to be. Bar, why can't I help?"

He tried to speak. She was looking directly at him. A flood of red rushed over his face. It couldn't be possible that she meant— And yet what else did she mean?

"Rae—God forgive me—I've got to tell you there's— Rae, there's another woman."

She grew white, but her eyes, after closing a mere instant, kept steadily on him.

"Yes, Bar. I knew."

That shock brought him around on her. She nodded.

"I mean that I guessed. No, I hadn't heard—much. A little." She put her hand on his. "It was hard to tell me, but we've come to it. And, Bar, please, *please* don't take it this way! You couldn't help what's happened, and I know that. I know it."

"Couldn't help!" he cried out bitterly. "If I could make you know how I feel—though what does that matter? It wouldn't make me less a brute, a coward!"

Rae had full command of her voice when she spoke next.

"But we needn't be embarrassed!"

Why should you feel cowardly just because you're a man? If I'd told you there was some one else, it would have been quite the regular thing—your being disappointed and all that. Come!" she said vigorously, and as if annoyed. "It's not harder for a woman than for a man. What an idiotic convention! Do let's be sensible at least! Of course I care for you, but, after all, I partly guessed. Yes, I had my share in our little blunder of last night."

"And all this doesn't wipe out last night," he said wretchedly.

"But if you'll listen?" He visibly tried then. "Yes, Bar, you know I've always said women should be frank about love. They ought to propose to men if they like them. But last night I wasn't frank; I was primitive and underhanded. I deliberately tried to 'get' you. I played for you against the other woman!"

His angry stare gave way to an incredulous shrug.

"You say that to spare me."

"No, no. Nor even to save my own face, for I'm *not* ashamed that you don't love me. Why should I be? But I was ashamed last night of what I'd done. When I played the fiddle, I was trying to get back my self-respect. Bar, I felt that the me in the moonlight couldn't last for you."

"You were acting a part?" He frowned. No man relishes having been hoodwinked, even if he's the prize.

"Don't think that, please. It was all a sort of primitive instinct. I know you never saw it in me before, but it seems to have come to me—as I say, there's been a change—and that moonlight Rae is not such a stranger to *me*. Not that I deplore her entirely, you understand. Indeed," she added with a slight flush, "I approve of her, to an extent, and even owe her an apology. She must have tried long ago to get acquainted with me, and I wasn't hospitable. I was a *prig*." She gave Bar

another of her questioning looks. "Well, so much for my dual self. She has her place, but she stepped out of it last night. And it was she whom you fancied you liked, not this more real me here by you now, Bar. And you saw all this when the morning came, and so did I. Perhaps we saw last night."

He was merely gazing at her. Again she touched his arm.

"So it was my fault. It was really my fault months ago, for not telling you frankly how I'd come to feel after your last trip to the coast. That was mere silly rubbish, schoolgirly timidity. I'm really much more ashamed of *that*!" Her red cheeks added proof to her confession.

"How you try to excuse me, Rae!"

"But you weren't at fault! But let me say for my own side that if I'd really *known* about—her—I'd not have— Surely you know that. Well, let's say we've talked it out, shall we? And we've been frank and sensible. Nothing else would have worked. It couldn't. It couldn't. And don't look tragic or I'll be embarrassed, and I'm not embarrassed, truly. I've so much to do and be happy for—I don't feel in the least pathetic!" she added proudly, though she smiled.

"No, I'm not worth that, Rae."

She allowed this merely male speech to pass.

"Of course," she said in another tone, "Lucy and John are a problem. But they must take things as they are. You can go back to New York at once, and later I'll explain somehow."

"And call it your fault? No, there's a limit even to *my*—"

She cut him short.

"Don't call names. You're my friend, the nice friend I've always had, since long before all this muddle ever started. Bar, there's just one thing that could hurt me—yes, and *embarrass* me. If you let this spoil our friendship!

There's no need for that, don't you see? Don't you see?"

There was just one right thing for him to do then—the thing she would have done if their positions had been reversed—and he comprehended in time. He seized her hand in a quick clasp, as if he himself were reaching out for that very friendship.

"Now," she planned, "you needn't see Lucy at all. It's about the time when she and the kiddies go to the beach—the beach across the river. We'll hurry back, and you can pack and slip away."

But they did not have to hurry. They had hardly turned when, behind them, from the beach, came the ripping purr of a speeding car. Rae looked back and held up her hand.

"That's Neddy Powell," she said. "It's his car we heard last night. He always goes this way. Hello, Neddy!"

The big car had stopped. From the wheel a tanned, bareheaded youth leaned down, grinning admiringly. He anticipated Rae's request.

"Shan't I give you a lift?"

"Just what we want." She introduced the two men, and Bar helped her in and followed. Neddy started the car.

"He thinks this is a cautious crawl," she said to Bar, in answer to his glance of inquiry. The marshes seemed to be sliding by in a green blur, while the bridge and its crabbers loomed with frightful rapidity. But the swiftness of the ride was a welcome distraction. Only, Rae made Neddy positively slow down for the bridge. But, that passed, he speeded again. Then he had whirled them to the shore side of the house, and they got down, and he glided away, still grinning.

Rae's surmise was correct. Lucy and the kiddies had gone to the beach. The only train before afternoon would leave in half an hour. When Bar came downstairs with his bag, he found Rae

on the porch. She smiled as he stood there, hesitant.

"Rae, there's one thing I should tell you, because of what you might hear. It's not known, but she's—divorcing him. They weren't happy."

"Ah? I'm so glad! Anything clandestine—that would have been intolerable to you!"

"Rae! If I even remotely deserved your faith—"

She shook her head. He was so pathetically male!

"But some day some really big man will find you, perhaps."

Well, it was the thing that, in the reversed position, the woman always says to the man. But the man always replies, "Never! It can never be any one else." She forbore that naive selfishness.

"Perhaps, Bar." She gave him both her hands. "And, Bar, you know I wish you both happiness, from the bottom of my heart!"

He kissed her hands, saying nothing.

IV.

He was halfway to the station when he saw coming toward him the boy who had brought him the telegram last night. The premonition he felt now was correct. This also was his message, and it came as before from Laura Gale.

Boston. Arrive New York six p. m. Shall go to house.

The house off the Avenue—and she would be waiting there.

At the station, he sent his own message. It was just five words:

On way to New York.

He hesitated many minutes over the composition. "Everything all right," or, "Everything settled"—some phrase of reassurance—but for some strange reason he omitted it. And why? Why wasn't he making that telegram a paean

of relief, the caress of an impatient lover?

The train was a little delayed, as usual. He paced the platform. Well, he was free. He was free.

While he was pacing, he was aware of a reiterant honk-honk. Looking up, he saw Neddy Powell's car on the turnpike, slowing down for a vegetable cart. That passed, the car shot on again, northward. Its direction and swiftness vaguely disturbed him, as if it typified his own journey, the journey he was somehow not quite ready to make, with its object so unexpectedly nearer.

Then he was on the train.

With its rapid motion, he fell into a confused fantasy. He was picturing two women, but always separately, who appeared or disappeared in flashes as brief as the groves or streams or fields of the landscape, which were hardly glimpsed before they were left behind. Fragmentary words also—Laura Gale's, or her laugh, or a sentence of Rae's, and once her "It must *feel* its adventure!"

He did not know how long this state had lasted when he was conscious that the mental pictures were no longer accompanied by material ones. The scenery was stationary—countryside all about except, eastward, the sparkling sea.

In the coach was a growing curiosity; then a commotion of protest along with explanation.

"Freight wreck ahead." "What? Another?" "Yes, by heck, third this summer!" "Well, a road run like this!" "Two hours' delay, *anyhow*!"

Finally every one got out, Barnard among them. He was still half tranced, and he alone was unresentful of the obstruction that messed the roadway. It interested him only until he learned that no one had been hurt. It was a case of simple wait. In short, he welcomed the respite.

The passengers were all gathered about the wreck. Bar turned away from

these and clambered over some dunes to the near-by beach. The tide was out, and he began to walk up and down on the sand. He was quite alone.

Fantasy gave way to actual thought.

It was that sudden nearness of Laura that forced him to concentrate. Still in Maine, she would have been less definite. In New York, she was imminent.

And behind him, recent and vivid memory, was Rae.

Do women act like that if they care? Some, out of pique. But Rae wasn't that sort, and, besides, she had said outright that she wasn't ashamed.

Maybe she only imagined that she cared. She had built up this love during their separation. But no; he thought of her eyes that morning, when she had sent him away. No, it was not imagination!

Then, with a reversion almost to vindictiveness, he recalled her words: "I played for you against the other woman." He had a man's resentment of that. She should not have said it even if it were true. Suppose it is the woman's method, a woman doesn't put it into words. That was crude, decidedly.

At the same time, it held flattery. Yes.

Her dual self, she had called that Rae of last night. Ah, yes, all that talk about duality—

Laura Gale did not have this bewildering quality. She had moods, incalculable and fascinating, but she was forever the woman to whom a man must be coming; that was it exactly—coming. He must always be leaving anything else, because she was always either waiting or eluding. To pursue the eluder, to master her—that appealed to him. But at this moment Laura had lost some of this lure by coming to meet him. He did not realize that this was Laura's blunder; it just seemed to him that some of her mystery was suddenly lacking. Rae was the ungauged now.

"It's no use," Rae had said, "trying to do the impossible." She had meant, "It's no use trying to love *me*. Make your other love the big, perfect thing."

The big, perfect thing! Bar stopped in his pacing, and in that moment he knew the truth. His love and Laura's was not big; it was only overmastering. It was not love; it was passion.

The swan was to turn back into the toad—the toad he had always been. And Rae had chosen the other transformation. She was the gallant ship, already sailing for new, fine ports.

Sailings, ports! And that was his business—*ports!* That was his love. Rae had known that, last night. And how she had listened to him!

Good God, a man was a fool, an idiot, to give up that understanding and sympathy! And she would have gone with him, anywhere in all the world.

Over him flashed the scene of this other conquest awaiting him in the city—the beautiful woman, luringly garbed; an exotic conservatory or a boudoir, perfumes, soft, warm air—Pulse maddening, but so *easy*, so *sure!* And afterward so surely, so inevitably *stale!*

Experience, early and yet thorough, attained before Rae had even grown up, had kept him from other women in these later years, or almost from them. Sometimes, in some tropical port or eastern capital, he had gone just far enough to get the foretaste of that unescapable staleness. And it would come again.

But he hadn't believed that until now. Rae had shown him the contrast, and he knew.

Suppose he should say that he could choose still between these dual selves?

Laura Gale? But she herself had insisted on the doubtful outcome of his mission. And his telegram—it had said nothing definite.

Suppose he made the right choice? Would he feel sorry for Laura? She would be vengeful; she would want to

hurt him, and she would know how. Somehow the mere fact of his feeling this about her showed the level of their love.

Suppose—

Something was interrupting him. What was it? Ah, it was some one calling his name. He whirled around. Just behind the dunes a big car had come to a stop. It was in nowise surprising to him that the driver of the car should be the ubiquitous youth, Neddy Powell.

"Hey, Mr. Walcott, want me to take you around the wreck? I can carry you up to White Beach. You can get a train there. I'll be mighty glad, you know."

Bar approached the car. His mind was like a whirlwind.

"Another hour likely before they'll pull you out of here," Neddy added. "Better let me give you a lift."

"But you're headed for home," Bar stammered.

"Oh, that's no matter—not the least."

"Well—I guess—Thanks. It's no use hanging out here, is it?" Bar spoke as in a dream. "I'll get my bag."

He made for the train, while Neddy swung the car back into the turnpike. He was still in this trancelike state when he came down from the coach with his bag. He got in beside Neddy. Neddy bent to the starter.

"Wait!"

Bar spoke sharply now, and breathlessly. Neddy looked up, questioningly.

"Take—Let's go the other way—back to—" He waved his hand.

"Oh, back *there*?" said Neddy, surprised. "Then you're *not* going to the city?"

"No."

Neddy smiled and turned the car for home.

On, on—no matter how fast, Neddy! The choice has been made, but it must be made irrevocable, so the sooner, the better. And it's the right choice, it's right!

Even if she doesn't take him back just now— But she'll want to help him, and what other way could help? And they can go together on that next voyage of his into the Unknown.

The car sped like the wind. It came over Bar that he had left behind, there at that wreckage on the railroad, his weakling self, the self he would never be again, and the bigger self was here, being whirled on the wings of fate to safety.

It was not that the road curved too sharply, but that into it, from a tree-hidden slope, a farmer's wagon sprawled, as if from nowhere.

Neddy's horrified glance at Bar, and Bar's answering one, that meant, "Yes, you've got to!" occupied a space of time too small to own a name. Neddy swerved his car. It seemed to leap sideways. The farmer's shouts, and the backward crashing of his horses against their wagon—

It was over.

Some yards away Neddy, all bloody, was struggling to his feet. But Bar did not stir from where he lay under the car.

V.

Laura Gale never knew the truth of that ride. She always believed that he had been coming to her when he was killed. Rae managed it that way.

Mrs. Gale was reckless and moody for a few months, but she did not divorce her husband. There was no need,

as her next lover was himself a married man.

The full truth of that ride—did Rae herself ever know it?

Why was he coming back?

And if he were coming to stay, would she have taken him? And could she have kept him?

Once, about a year later, Mrs. John said:

"John, I don't understand her. I wonder if she *did* care so very much?"

"How can you ask that," John replied, "when you hear her play?"

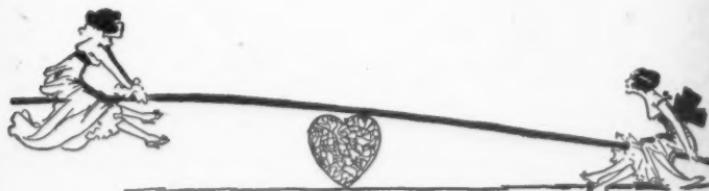
His wife gazed at him, wondering.

By this time, Rae was being talked of. Critics were all praise for her art; her charm needed no comment, though it got plenty. But one critic seemed to go deeper. He almost understood.

"It was not a violin that we heard, and I do not know what to call it. To me it was a voice—some spirit, some brother soul inhabiting places we have never glimpsed, coming back to tell us things we cannot put into words, so that we are just set wondering, wondering. But she is not wondering—she knows, and she is trying to tell us the simple, miraculous secret of that voice in the violin."

To Rae, it was simple, this miracle. He did seem to come to her when she played. The big self of him—she had that Bar, and she could keep him.

She had him this way most of all when she played to herself, alone. In this way they made many journeys together into the marvel of the Unknown.





The Orchard of Gems

By Countess Barcynska

Author of "Love Maggie," "The Honey Pot," etc

THEY sat at lunch in one of the alcoves of the gilded restaurant, fit setting for a millionaire and a pretty actress. Not that Virginia's dress or looks indicated anything of her profession. Her beauty was of the quiet order, not flamboyant; her dress showed no eccentricity, only perfect taste. For his part, Lloyd Vincent's outward aspect had nothing of the hall mark of money about it. He was of the age and the experience that avoid an ostentatious show of wealth.

Virginia rested her chin on her hands and surveyed her companion with frank interest. He returned her gaze with something more than interest. He was immensely taken with her, stimulated by her youth, her charm, and her freshness.

"What does it feel like to be so rich?" she asked.

"Well, in the first place, it's useful," he answered. "It buys things—pretty things for pretty women."

She pursed her lips.

"That's not a very original way of spending. If I were rich, I should spend my money on pretty things for ugly women. Oh, there's such a lot you could do with it! Good things, that would make men, women, and children bless your name."

Vincent had no overwhelming ambition to hear himself or his name blessed, by countless unknown people. He liked to see a return for his money—where women were concerned, a return in kind. Virginia's suggestion made him

suspicious. Pose, in an actress, was to be expected, but this one seemed too thin. He did not for an instant believe it to be genuine. Yet his eyes swept her appreciatively. She was dressed so simply and in such good taste that she might have passed for the average man's wife or sister. And unlike most musical-comedy stars, her complexion was her own; so was her hair, and she wore no jewels at all. Yes, a cleverly thought-out pose, he decided.

"Tell me, then," he said, more desirous of watching her pretty lips than of hearing the words that fell from them. "Imagine my riches—or part of them—were yours."

"Well, in the first place, I'd rather be as I am, but if I had a great deal of money, I'd want to get rid of it. I'd give a nice, snug income for life to all those poor gentlepeople—a huge army—who have to keep up appearances on nothing a year. Then there are the poor little children. I'd have beautiful homes in the country for them, and have them taken away from cruel fathers and mothers. And old people, and sick clerks—Oh, there's no end to what I could do with money!"

"You talk like a philanthropic society gone crazy." He smiled indulgently. "I know of a far better use for money than that. Shall I tell you?"

"Yes, do." The innocent expression in her face was almost convincing to the hard-eyed money-getter.

"To spend it on you," he said shortly.

"Oh!" She colored, a trifle resent-

fully. "Of course, you're joking. I have everything—everything I want. I hope you don't think I'm a sort of Enid Day."

Enid Day was a particularly lustrous star in the theatrical firmament, as were each of her jewels. When she went out, she put one in mind of a jewelry-store window.

"You're very quaint," said Vincent. "You don't seriously mean that you're indifferent to—jewelry?"

"N-o." She hesitated. "I've a very perfect taste in gems. I have jewels that a king couldn't buy me—" She broke off. "But I'm telling you too much."

"You couldn't do that."

He had paid the check. Virginia rose.

"And now," said Vincent, "you must come around to my place. If you're fond of pictures and old furniture, I can show you some. Besides"—he looked at her tenderly as he took his seat beside her in the waiting automobile—"I want to talk to you—seriously."

A good many men had proposed to Virginia. She guessed that something of the kind was in Vincent's mind, and though she was not in the least in love with him, he impressed her not unfavorably. She might grow to like him.

Virginia's views about love were serious ones. For an actress, she was remarkably inexperienced in the ways of the world. Until two years before, she had always had her mother with her, and when her mother had died, Virginia's nice feeling had kept her from immediate contact with the ugly side of life that reveals itself behind the footlights. Men respected her and treated her differently from most of the other girls.

She was not one to make casual acquaintances. Vincent had been introduced to her by the manager, and she was unaware of the motive that had

lain behind the introduction. She knew that a large proportion of girls in her profession were not "quite good," but with the large charity that her mother had taught her, she pitied rather than condemned them. Were they not the victims of inherited moral weakness or environment? Most of the stage women she had mixed with had the inherent decency to hide their worst weaknesses from her, and during her membership of the chorus, they had not talked flagrantly in her presence. Admiration, love letters, presents from strangers were casual matters—part of her life. They amused her when they did not bore her, and that was all.

She enjoyed the hour's ramble over Vincent's big, handsome house. His pictures were magnificent. He had a superb collection of works of art, and, up to a certain point, very good taste.

It was only when she prepared to go that he spoke to her of what had been in his mind from the first moment he had known her.

"No, don't go yet," he said. "I want to give you something. I bought it for you this morning, only I've been afraid to give it to you because—well, you said you didn't like jewelry. Anyhow, here it is."

He held out a velvet case. Virginia grew suddenly serious. She disliked rejecting presents—for the sake of the donor's feelings. She opened the case silently. A magnificent diamond pendant glittered on its bed of white satin. Vincent watched her face, fully expecting to see the jewel lust transfigure it. Instead, he saw only disappointment.

"Don't you like it?" he asked.

"Y-es. It's very nice, but I can't take it." She placed it on the table. "You mustn't be offended. I don't take presents—like that—from men."

Vincent began to feel angry. She was carrying her pose of prudery too far. Was she not an actress? Had she

not lunched with him, and returned to his house with him? Then why—

"Oh, come!" he said, a trifle testily. "Not from any man, of course, but from me—"

"But why"—her clear eyes were raised to his interrogatively—"why you any more than another?"

"Because, although I've only known you a little while, I feel something deeper for you than mere casual friendship. I want you to give me the right to make you presents, to look after you. You mustn't misunderstand me."

"No," she answered, with a sudden, swift comprehension. "I don't. I guess you think your money buys and sells souls, Mr. Vincent." There was scorn in her voice. Her sweet mouth hardened. She felt she would like to teach this man a lesson. "I'm going now. Good-by. And next time you talk to a girl like that, just make sure of her first."

Her seeming reluctance only spurred Vincent on. She was worth winning.

"Listen to me for a moment," he said. "Don't you like me?"

"I thought you were very nice—at first."

"You said you had jewels that a king couldn't buy you."

Up went her proud little head.

"So I have."

"And do you care for the person who gave them? Is that it? Is that why you don't listen to me?"

"Just that!" Her voice thrilled. "I've loved that person since I could pray at my mother's knee. He has looked after me, given me everything I have—my home, even those jewels I was talking about. I reckon he's my religion."

Vincent glowered at her. Here, then, was the explanation of her coldness—another lover. He would find it hard to win her, but win her he would.

Virginia seemed suddenly to melt.

"See here!" she said impulsively. "You shall see my jewels, and my home, and all that you couldn't give me, if you like. It's in the country, outside New York, and I motor down every night when the show's over. Come to breakfast to-morrow at six o'clock."

Vincent gasped.

"I should like to, very much, but—the hour! Wouldn't it be rather inconvenient?"

"Well, you'd have to start about five." There was laughter in her eyes now. "It's the best part of the day. You'll have a fine spin and a clear road."

"But he—"

Virginia grew serious again.

"Oh, you won't see him," she answered mockingly. "Don't worry."

Vincent took her hand.

"At six o'clock, then, to-morrow. Where?"

"Sandycove. Mine is the first house you come to after you pass the level crossing. Come to me in the orchard. Good-by."

He let her go. The little air of mystery about her piqued him. So, after all, her righteousness and innocence were a pose. He had thought his knowledge of women could not be at fault. No doubt she wanted to show him all her trivial possessions to impress him, so that he would give her infinitely more. Viewed in that light, her rejection of the diamond pendant was a clever dodge. He lit a cigar and sat for quite an hour or more thinking of her. She had caught his fancy. It was a relief to find a woman who had some originality and brains, who did not show her hand at the first move. Women being his chief occupation in life, he had some of their smallnesses. Curiosity was one of them. He was quite anxious to see Virginia's jewels.

The next morning he rose at four, and was in his automobile speeding in the direction of Sandycove before five had struck. He passed the level cross-

ing she had told him of, and kept a sharp lookout for her house. There was something piquant in this dewy-morning call. Virginia must be very sure of herself and her beauty to expose it so ruthlessly at such an hour.

The first habitation he came to was a tiny cottage, creeper and rose-covered, an orchard at the side of it. On the little white gate was painted: "The Orchard." Its primitiveness amused him. She would be easily pleased if she was proud of this.

He did not go up the path leading to the door, but made for the orchard, as she had enjoined. The trees were all in blossom. They looked like veiled brides. Wood flowers with starry faces were at his feet. Cobwebs glistened, outlined in drops of dew. All was sun-kissed, fragrant, sparkling. Under the trees Vincent saw a table laid. So they were to breakfast out of doors! And then he forgot everything else, for through the greenery he saw Virginia coming toward him, the embodiment of young morning, and he conjured up a mental picture of how she would look in the grand surroundings he would give her. It would be easy to take her away from such simplicity.

"So you've come." She smiled. "Well, that was brave of you. Let's have breakfast right away, and then we can talk." Her eyes sparkled mischievously. "And you shall see my great possessions—my jewels. Aren't you hungry? I am."

Vincent found he had an excellent appetite, and while they ate, Virginia prattled like a child. She was very refreshing. Though an actress, there was nothing suggestive of the footlights about her.

"And so," said Vincent, when a little country "hired girl" had come out and cleared the table, "and so this is where you have chosen to live. What do the country folk think of having

such a famous young lady in their midst?"

"They don't know. They just take me—and, I think, love me—for what I am. I'm not an actress to them. I'm just Virginia West, who sings at their charity concerts and borrows their babies—"

"Borrows babies!"

"Yes, I'm so fond of them. It's like playing dolls over again."

Vincent felt at a loss.

"But doesn't he mind—" he began. "He? Who? Oh!" She dimpled. "No, Scripture says he was powerful fond of them."

"You're very mysterious, Virginia," he returned testily. He put out his arm and drew her to him. "But let's finish with play. You know what I want, dear little girl. This is all very sweet and pretty, of course, but it's nothing to what I can give you, and — You can leave him, I suppose? You're not married to him, are you?"

Then Virginia sprang to her feet.

"Oh, you blind man!" she cried. "Do you think it's a man I want, or jewels, or money? No doubt you could buy up my cottage and orchard in a second, but you can't buy this!" Two small white hands indicated very plainly that she meant herself. "Because it's not for sale! It's men like you, Mr. Vincent, who make women what better women are ashamed of! It's men like you who make it difficult for girls who want to play straight! It's men like you who soil the good name of the stage! No, just let me talk for once—straight out—so that you can get a true viewpoint of yourself. For the one thing that money can't buy you offer me money! Don't you know love is the only thing that buys love? Pure love, not the poor, tarnished apology you mistake for it?"

"Don't you think?"—Vincent's voice was nasty—"that, according to your own confession, as you owe all you

have to a man, you are rather in the position of the women you despise?"

"That's where you're wrong!" she blazed. "You leaped to that conclusion. I did not tell you that a man gave me what I possess. I was speaking of Something higher, something divine, that my mother taught me to believe in—a Name I do not care to speak in your presence, a Name men use in blasphemy and women in blessing. I'm proud of my little cottage and my orchard because **I've** earned and paid for them. And now, before you go, if you want to see my jewels—jewels that a king couldn't give me—here they are all around you.

"Look at that cobweb set with tiny diamonds! Could any jeweler make a thing so lovely? And this"—she picked a blue, cuplike flower—"turquoise with a gem of dew in its heart! Look at the grass shimmering with nature's jewels—myriads of them! See the sun kissing them!

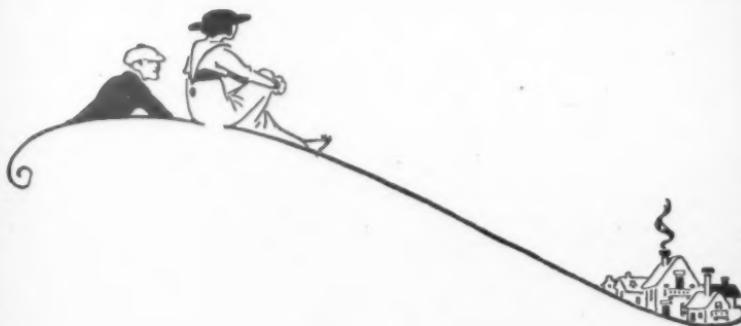
"Ah, when men like you, Mr. Vincent, come to me with the offer of jewels, man and dollar made, I only think of all they cannot give me, and of what

they would take from me. Yes, take from me! The right to live here, to see the sun rise, to walk in my garden among my flowers, to know that I am part of the great scheme because I am living as I was meant to live—all that I should forfeit. For what? For rings on my fingers, and round my neck diamonds, and precious stones in my hair—mere costly baubles, the price paid for me, written upon me, for all the world to read!

"Don't you see I'm richer in my own possessions—the love of the people round me, the songs of the birds, the beauty that is beyond words and unpurchasable? I think"—her voice faltered—"perhaps I should not blame you so, for the saddest thing, the greatest tragedy in life, must be to have eyes that are not blind, yet see not."

She stood still, looking at him. He could not meet her eyes, but, with bent head, turned and walked slowly back the way he had come.

As he closed the orchard gate, he heard the birds singing, and as he drove away, the sound of a woman's voice—singing, too.

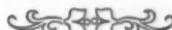




The Trouble Woman

By Sarah Glover Curtis

Author of "A Maker of Men," etc.



ANOTHER man than Ferguson Ames might have laughed, would at least have made her repeat her amazing declaration, but his clever eyes were already speculative as they studied the strength and grace of the slender figure before him. He liked to see people with well-controlled bodies, people whose feet were well under them, and this girl stood as lightly, as perfectly poised, as an animal free in the jungle. He noted that before he glanced at her pale, fine face.

"Won't you sit down?"

He watched her clean step as she crossed to the chair he indicated.

"So you want to come here and learn the corset business," he said after a pause. "How old are you?"

"Nineteen."

"Education?"

"Impractical."

A twinkle warmed the shrewd blue of his eyes.

"Suppose you tell me what it has been and something about yourself."

"I was educated in a convent in France until I was eleven," she told him, "and when we came to New York, I went to private schools when my father was in funds—he taught me himself when he wasn't. He was an artist

—of a kind—and unsucces^s followed us from Paris to New York, from New York to this city of Torpbridge. He died six months ago, in dreams as he had lived. Me—I have no relatives, almost no money, and a great need of more." A smile flickered for an instant upon her lips; then she continued, "I embroider well, I can tell you the names of the kings of France and the lives of many great artists, and I have French and German."

"That accounts for your mellow vowels and crisp consonants." He nodded. "Did you intend to come down and embroider the corsets," he inquired politely, "or teach the operators irregular verbs?"

The color surged under the clear, fair skin.

"Neither," she answered evenly, "although I could do both if you desired. I—I want to come down and work at the machines—I learn the different processes, learn factory life, factory workers. And then—"

"And then?" he repeated.

"And then I—I think you would find me of—of great service to you," she ended breathlessly.

He considered her quietly.

"I shouldn't be surprised if I did,"

he assented. "But you're signing up for a long apprenticeship if you intend to go the rounds."

"I know. But it's the only practical way, isn't it, if I want to be successful? Will it be possible for me to go from one department to another? Will they let me?"

"You might say it was my wish," he suggested.

"Wouldn't it be better not?" she returned uneasily. "Wouldn't that set me apart from the others? And I don't want that—yet."

He merely said, "You'll do," and swung to his desk.

"Your name?"

"Thérèse Theuriet."

"Address?"

"15 Pine Street."

"Go down to the employment office and apply for a job. They'll be glad to get you. By the way, how in the world did you get in to see me?"

Even white teeth gleamed between her bright lips as she answered:

"Every day for a week I have been here. I wouldn't say what I wished. And this morning they let me in so that they will not see me any more."

Mr. Ames laughed.

"Good enough! Report to me occasionally," he ordered.

"That—that is most kind! How often? Once, twice the month?"

"Well—not quite so often," he demurred. "Suppose we say—ah—every six months, as a starter?"

It took all Thérèse's courage to go to the factory the next day. She had applied for a job and been curtly bidden to report a little after seven, but as she mounted the broad wooden steps, she was shivering nervously. She had not been able to form any definite conception of factory life. Its chief allure had lain in its being an escape from the impractical, unsatisfying existence she had had. But now that the old chapter had closed, and the new was opening before

her, the haze of her ignorance grayed it with fear.

Buzzing through the big doors with her went a swarm of girls—Huns and Slavs, Italians, Americans, Swedes. Intent as they were on their own affairs, scarcely a look was directed toward her as she went with them to the rooms where they left their outdoor wraps. She found the department at which she had been ordered to report without difficulty and, feeling painfully conspicuous and painfully futile at one and the same time, presented herself before the forewoman. She was appointed to a machine, and with the forewoman's promise to return and "set her goin'" when she could, Thérèse sat down and began to take stock of her surroundings.

The room stretched long and narrow; the innumerable windows were clean, the air sweet and fresh. On long pine tables stood from eighty to one hundred motor-driven machines, not unlike the ordinary sewing machine. In the center of the room was a big iron "crib" filled with bundles of work, which the checker in charge was already distributing.

Gradually the room filled with girls, young and old, cheerful and depressed, in all stages of untidiness. Two Hungarians took their places on either side of Thérèse, and after staring at her with avid interest, turned away to join in the merry banter that was racketing from one end of the room to the other.

Sharply at seven-thirty, the sound of voices died out before the warning shriek of the factory whistle, and almost immediately there arose the low hum of machinery set in motion. Little by little the whirring increased until it seemed to Thérèse to be a tangible thing that revolved around her in ever-widening, louder, swifter circles. Involuntarily she put her hands to her ears to protect them from the noise-scarred air.

"'Smatter? Sick?"

Thérèse looked up into the fore-woman's kindly eyes.

"No." She struggled to smile it. "But the noise is terrible!"

"Huh! This is a lullaby. Y' oughta go into th' metal room. Now watch me an' use yuh bean."

She sat down in the girl's place and opened the bundle of work that had been given to her.

"Yuh've gotta seam these, see? Hold it ready to feed to th' machine, then put yuh foot on th' pedal. That starts th' power. Watch out yuh don't push yuh finger under th' needle together with th' goods. It takes a long time to put in a new needle an' it's liable t' hurt yuh if it breaks off in yuh finger. An' remember—all I gotta say is remember not to try to stop that wheel like yuh would yuh mother's sewing machine. Yuh might lose a wing. If you wanna shut off th' power, use th' pedal and leave th' wheel be."

It was a simple process, requiring a minimum of skill, but when the fore-woman left her to work it out for herself, Thérèse's slender, capable hands blundered unbelievably. Her motions were jerky, unsteady, and for the life of her, she could not take her mind from the danger of that swift-flashing needle. Her body grew tense, her lips a line of straining scarlet against her blanched face.

"You 'fraid dat leele nee'le?"

The girl at the next machine was leaning toward her, a half-derisive smile on her broad face.

"Don' be," she continued, as Thérèse stopped work with a shudder. "Dat nee'le get you one time—sure—but you not feel heem ven he do. After—yes, bad. You learn slow. Dere ain't de rush, no. Slow. One ding learn, den do. Vatch me, pliz, an' do."

At the end of the day she was dog-tired and discouraged. New muscles were jerking their way to the recogni-

tion her jaded mind was all too ready to accord. When she reached her room in the red-carpeted boarding house, she threw herself down on her bed and, her head buried in her arms, gave herself over to gloom.

All the irking things of the day came grimly in upon her. The air of her fresh little room deadened as the factory air had done from the exudations of eighty toiling bodies; the uninterrupted rush of the machines jarred in her ears; the smacking of grease-moistened lips was as audible as at the noon hour when the actual warmth of food-tainted breaths had touched her; the swift-thrusting needle glittered before her eyes; and the memory of soiled speech and clothing was clear as reality.

Her whole fastidious self rose to war against the desire to succeed. Was money, with all the beauty and culture and charity it typified, worth the horror of such contact? And then that very desire itself freed her from the danger of caste blindness.

By degrees, the realization bore in upon her that these very girls whose every manner was distasteful to her, whose every word grated, had all succeeded. Measured by their environment, their heritage, the livings they were making were good; the things they considered necessities their parents had deemed luxuries. They were more than self-supporting, for instinctively Thérèse knew that the percentage of girls with dependents upon them was high. Thérèse, herself, on the other hand, well born, gently bred, had been obliged to leave her own world to enter theirs for a livelihood. It was along the path they walked that she hoped to climb to success.

And now, from the inch height of the first step, the numberless, crowding irritants threatened a downward push.

Believing that an ability to earn a living was far from being the ultimate test for humanity, Thérèse was yet con-

vinced that it should enter largely into that test. The impractical visionings that had wrecked her father's life were largely responsible for this viewpoint, but she clung to it, feeling that any human being who could not be held up to the animal standard of fending for itself or for its young was essentially deficient.

Thus persuaded, she became sharply aware of her own lack, of the littleness of the class distinctions that had made her shrink from these girls who weighed well in the special scales she had set for herself. She pondered whether she would do as well proportionately; whether she would be able to get for herself what the sham jewels and gaudy shoes spelled for these others; whether the culture and breeding of which she was as finely conscious as of the soft texture of her skin and hair would prove the high assets they should.

Then the strength and cleanliness of a swift resolve swept away as completely as a fresh sea breeze purges sultry air the squeamishness that had equally obscured her own goal and the girl workers' value. Until she was their equal in the salient things she prized, she would forget the unpleasant attributes that were conspicuously first in their personalities. Fundamentals were all that mattered.

Yet the weeks that followed were bitterly hard. Fatigue haunted her, laid the black of its finger under the blue-green eyes, but battled in vain against the elastic poise of the supple body and the decision of the alert mind. The process, as has been shown, was simple, but it was not until Thérèse had slaved six weeks, studying the other workers' methods and the theories of waste motion, that she became an expert worker. Every one was paid on the piece system, and it was with a genuine pride sending the delicate color throbbing to her cheeks that she counted out fourteen

dollars and eight cents from her envelope at the end of the sixth week. She had learned the first process, she had made firm her place on the first rung, and her feet were becoming ladder-wise.

Her record made a transfer to another department a fairly easy thing, and afterward Thérèse came to look upon it as her first real entry into the life of the factory. Her body, grown accustomed to the toil, no longer hampered her mind.

Everything interested her. The machinery held an unforeseen fascination for her, and she waylaid mechanics and machinists with endless questions. They answered her with tolerant good nature until the day when she deftly took a machine apart, freeing an operator's tortured hand, before they arrived on the scene. Whereupon, they decreed her "some kid," and gave her much un-sought information.

The operators themselves she came to know as only a fellow worker could. At first they had been shy of her, suspicious of her low voice and slangless speech, resentful of her supreme neatness. But gradually, as they saw that she took upon herself no airs of superiority, they came to overlook the difference between them, admitting her into their comradeship. They thought her a little mad in her enthusiastic forays for knowledge into the byways and highways of factory affairs, but she had a way of listening gravely to their speech and then smiling a vivid pathway to their hearts. Her laughter and her smiles were rare, but, as one girl said:

"If yuh're up tuh yuh knees in snow water, and the wind offen the Sound is goin' through yuh like a rusty hatpin, an' *she* comes along with that grin workin'—why, yuh begin tuh look round for pussy willows!"

They began bringing their troubles to her, and, finding her sympathy prac-

tical and her advice sound, they gave her their confidence, and "Thérèse" slipped affectionately into "Terry."

The magnitude of the organization of which she was so small a part filled her with awe. The rules and regulations, the details of routine and procedure, took on a vital interest to her, so that she studied them tirelessly, tracing their necessity in the web of efficiency. Sometimes, seeing things from the operators' standpoint, a crosscut occurred to her, and she made eager notes and calculations against the day when she might be able to use them.

Every half year she sent in to Mr. Ames a report of her progress, feeling it wiser not to presume upon his time. Regularly she received a brief acknowledgment, expressing neither criticism nor commendation. But after the fourth report, there came a summons to his office.

As she entered, his eyes played about her, swift as blue lightning. He nodded curtly, motioning her to a chair near his own. Before him lay the reports she had sent in.

"Your last report states that you have become expert in every process except binding," he began abruptly. "Haven't you been in the binding department?"

"No, Mr. Ames. I—had difficulty in getting into it."

"And didn't you try again?"

There was no sarcasm in the voice, but Terry flushed as she answered:

"I tried three times and was definitely refused."

"Why?"

"I'm not sure."

"Who is the forewoman?"

"Lillian Merkle, a tall, thin—"

"I know her," Mr. Ames cut in. "Been here for fifteen years. Freed herself from the most abject poverty. Supports her sister's children. Reliable worker. Her reason?"

"She said she had no place for fitters—that she wanted steady workers."

Mr. Ames fitted one half-closed hand over the other and slightly hunched his heavy shoulders.

"Suppose you answer my question, Miss Theuriet."

Again the color showed in the pale, healthy cheeks.

"I disliked saying, but she is afraid I want her job."

"Do you?"

"No, oh, no! Of course I don't!"

"Get into her department. If she still refuses, go to the superintendent. He will have instructions from me."

Terry stood hesitating for a moment; then she spoke hurriedly:

"Is it essential to go through her department? The processes vary only a little, and she will be very unhappy about this."

A smile lurked about Mr. Ames' lips.

"Ye-es," he admitted. "But it will be very good for you."

It was not long before Terry understood why. When she presented herself again as an applicant before Lillian Merkle, the forewoman's big black eyes rose from her sallow skin, and in an anger-blurred voice she refused. Terry had no recourse but to go to the superintendent. But when she returned with him, she marked pityingly the acute apprehension in the other woman's face.

"Miss Merkle," the superintendent signified suavely, "here is a young lady who wishes to work temporarily in your department. I wish you would find a place for her."

"I ain't much on temporary workers, Mr. Fletcher." Her breath was coming in half sobs, and her defiant gaze was full upon him. "I've told her there was nothin' doin'."

"I'm sorry, but I must ask you to reconsider. At the end of two months, you are to report to me, Miss Theuriet."

Lillian Merkle, soured by adversity,

carrying the burden of life with wincingly taut muscles, had found her one joy in the importance of forewomanship. The taste of power was incredibly sweet to her, and she cherished the thought of her petty authority as a bibber does his choicest wines. She looked with distrust on any expert workers in her own department, and the sight of Terry's pretty head, with its ash-blond hair rippling smoothly back to the heavy knot, bending intently over a machine, infuriated her. She feared the girl as ignorance always fears the unknown, and the tales of Terry's progress through the factory, of her prodigious ability, her knowledge of machinery, aroused all the woman's latent antagonism. Terry's presence omened only one thing to Lillian—deposition; and with all the ingenuity that bitterness and rage can lend, she sought to rid herself of her.

Every piece that left Terry's machine was subjected to absurdly minute examinations; unjust condemnation and hysterical vituperation hailed around her. But, realizing that Lillian was an important, if unpleasant, factor in her higher education, Terry maintained a faithful watch over her temper and stuck it out. At the end of the two months, she left the binding room with the full comprehension that she had made a lasting enemy.

She was put in charge of a department whose forewoman was sick, and from that time on she came to be reckoned as a general-utility agent, taking over any one's duties as the occasion arose, filling in in any emergency. When the output of a department was below the efficiency mark, she was installed, and little by little she began to work out certain theories she held, and to bring tentative plans to Mr. Fletcher. She became known and trusted, so that harassed officials in perplexity, and unskilled workers in despair, would demand her presence. Where trouble was,

there Terry would be called, and soon it became a playful, appreciative title, "Terry the trouble woman."

But it was not until she had held her title for two years that real trouble came. Then Lillian Merkle, returning from a six weeks' sick leave, found Terry in her place, the department running smoothly, the output so markedly increased that Mr. Fletcher called her attention to it. She made no comment, but the bitterness sank deeper into the unhappy face; and it was soon after that Terry sensed the coming of misfortune.

She felt it in a dozen intangible ways—in smoldering eyes slowly averted, in whispering groups that melted away before her approach. An elusive spirit that threatened not only her, but the peace and tranquillity of the whole factory, seemed to brood darkly overhead. Among a changing mass of two thousand girls, it was impossible to discover agitators of discontent, and Terry's concern was increased to see old, seasoned workers talking earnestly and secretly together.

Torpbridge was a nonunion town, and the Ames Corset Factory was a nonunion factory, but when Terry discovered that the Garment Makers' Union had established a local on one of the main streets, she felt that she had reached a solution of the difficulty. She notified the superintendent, and the next day she received a summons to Mr. Ames' office.

He was busy at his telephone when she entered, but at his "Just a minute, Miss Theuriet," a big, lean young man, lounging at the window, turned. He rose to place a chair for her, giving her a friendly, gamin smile; and Terry, after a glance into the dark face, with its purplish eyes and snowy teeth, smiled swiftly in response. She withdrew her gaze to find Mr. Ames' eyes narrowed deliberatively upon her. He hung up his telephone, swung his chair

toward her, but did not speak. Silence hung like a dark cloud over them, lightened by the younger man's amused smile. Terry sat motionless, waiting.

Finally Mr. Ames spoke, and instead of the orders she was expecting, he asked:

"Do you know my son, Mike?"

The big young man found his feet easily and bowed gravely.

"His real name," Mr. Ames continued, and Terry marveled at the idly conversational tone—"is Marion. He's made it a life work to rise above it. I consented to his bearing his mother's family name, thinking it would be a character builder. It has proved—ah—a splendid muscle developer."

"Father," explained the young man amiably, "is peeved because I stayed an extra six months in France—and talked about going back."

"Driving an ambulance?" Terry asked politely.

"Aviation corps."

"Anything to put off the deadly grind of factory life, eh, Mike?"

Mike slowly straightened in his chair, and his eyes half closed to a twinkling gleam between his stubby, soot-black lashes.

"Oh, I don't know, father. Somehow I don't imagine it will be quite so bad—now." He grinned.

Mr. Ames ignored the grin.

"You'll probably get into all manner of difficulties—and Miss Theuriet will have to pull you out. Her department is that of trouble. If anything goes wrong, she is expected to rectify it."

"What a jolly calling!" Mike commented.

"Exactly. Well, Miss Theuriet," with a brisk change of manner that closed the door upon his son, "I'm afraid you were quite right in your apprehensions."

"Are they organizing?"

"Not yet, at any rate. But there are agitators all over the plant."

"Did the girls send a committee to you?"

"No, and I can't understand why not."

"Yesterday I overheard part of a conversation—enough for me to tell the girls to send a committee to you, that you would be glad to hear any reasonable request."

"What did they say?"

"There are certain people who don't like me, Mr. Ames, and they—they are very powerful in this movement."

"I know all about that, Miss Theuriet. I asked what they said."

Terry flushed uncomfortably.

"Most of the girls were inclined to do as I suggested. I thought I had convinced them. Then Li—a woman who especially dislikes me jumped up on a chair and began to talk to them. She told them I'd do anybody any time I could; that I had tried to do her out of her job, and any number of others; that I had been pushed ahead by the firm until I was incapable of thinking or acting squarely as far as the workers were concerned; that I'd do the workers any time to stand in with you."

"I say"—Mike hitched himself, chair and all, into the conversation—"did you have any come-back?"

After a look into his mocking face, Terry riveted her attention on Mr. Ames. Mike laid a hand on his father's arm.

"Tell the young lady I'm here, will you?"

Mr. Ames shook the hand off.

"What is it they want, Miss Theuriet?"

"A ten-per-cent raise and time and a half overtime."

Mr. Ames made no comment, but sat big and still at his desk, gazing out at the bright summer sea that lay far in the distance beneath his window. He appeared abstracted, remote, but the girl knew that he was weighing the demand, considering it, and that when he

text spoke, the decision would have been made; that it might be days or weeks before any one knew what it was, but, just, sane, irrevocable, it was being made now.

And while Terry was intent on the father, Mike was no less absorbed in her.

Mr. Ames turned to her abruptly.

"What do you think about it?"

"Me?"

"Exactly."

Terry drew a deep breath and braced her strong, slender hands against his desk.

"They ought to have it."

"Listen to the woman! How do you know that increase you're so blithely giving away doesn't constitute my entire income?" cried Mike.

"Don't you think they ought to have it?" Mr. Ames shot at him.

"How in the world should I know?" his son reproached him.

"As the future head of the factory, you should."

"I agree. But remember that two days spent in your office is a comparatively short time for even the future head to have learned all the factory business."

"Well—I'm going to let you settle the thing."

Terry caught her breath audibly, and Mike glowered at her before he shook his head sadly at his parent.

"The strain is telling on you, dad. I hate to think it, but you're crazy."

Mr. Ames took up a letter.

"Settle it as quickly as you can, and report."

Recognizing the finality of his tone, Terry rose, but Mike leaned over and caught the paper from his father's hand.

"Now, look here, governor, this won't do," he said gently. "You threw me overboard when I was a kid and couldn't swim——"

"You learned, didn't you?"

"I did. But this time don't forget

you're in with me, and I'm just green enough to get a strangle hold around your neck and pull you under. It's too darn' risky."

"I think not. Miss Theuriet, please give over whatever you are doing and place yourself at my son's service. Give him what help you can. Educate him."

"But——"

"Yes?"

"Very well, Mr. Ames. Good morning."

Mike waited until the door had closed behind her, then he confronted his father. The smile was gone, and the fine chin squared.

"Look here, father," he adjured gravely, "d'you realize the risks you're taking?"

"Exactly. All of them. Suppose you follow along after Miss Theuriet. Your time has suddenly become valuable, you know, and—mine always has been. Get out."

One afternoon a week later, Terry presented herself at Mr. Ames' office. She had to wait, and the secretaries and stenographers in the outer room watched her curiously. There was a delicate color in her usually pale cheeks and the long brows were drawn together. Her eyes, too, customarily so serene, were dark and stormy. When word came from Mr. Ames, she seemed to pull herself together with an effort, before crossing slowly to his office.

She paused within the closed door. Sitting on the end of his father's writing table, grinned Mike.

"Beat you to it!"

Mr. Ames did not speak, and there was an indefinite something in his manner that made her hesitate unhappily.

"Any new developments?" he suggested after a pause.

He was leaning back in his chair, and Terry, glancing from one big man to the other, found as little comfort in the quiet gravity of the father as in the

brilliant mischief of the son. But she answered in her usual businesslike way.

"Yes, Mr. Ames. This noon I happened to see Lillian Merkle walking with a man named Connolly, a representative of the Garment Makers' Union. She called his attention to me, and he stopped short to stare after me. I—I-am afraid," she went on with a sudden fraying of her voice, "that I have—have really helped on this trouble, Mr. Ames. Lillian—it—she knows what—what pride I take in having things go smoothly. And she—she knows as well as I do that everything could have been arranged peaceably and quietly. But I've just found out that there's going to be a mass meeting tonight, and I'm afraid they'll organize preliminary to a walk-out."

"I don't want that if it can be helped," Mr. Ames reflected. "But I don't quite see how it can be. What did you—er—Mike, decide about granting their requests?"

"To meet them," Mike responded.

"Quite right. The jump in prices makes it hard going for the girls. Too bad they haven't a little more sense. Well—it's on the knees of the gods." Mr. Ames scrutinized his son, whose whole interest was given to the erect, white-clad figure of the girl. "Don't take it too much to heart, Miss Theuriet. It doesn't seem to be worrying my son in the slightest. Was there anything else?"

"Yes, Mr. Ames. I have come to report," and her voice sounded strained even to her own ears, "that I've given your son all the information—instruction that I'm capable of—and to suggest that the superintendent would be of much greater service than I."

"But the super hasn't ash-blond hair and green eyes and the devil's own temper and—"

"Mr. Ames," Terry cut in, "am I to treat your son as your son or as my apprentice?"

"As your apprentice," came the grave reply.

She turned to Mike.

"Wait outside," she ordered curtly.

Mr. Ames settled back farther in his chair, his expression one of the liveliest interest. His son slid off the table, chuckling.

"Shot-before-sunrise stuff in the corset business, too, eh?" He opened the door, but paused to add amiably, "But you're too late, Terry, old girl," before closing it.

"Has he bothered you unbearably?"

A queer little smile sped across her face.

"I've tried to show him everything in connection with my work here," she said, leaving the question unanswered. "Men—young men—have so little idea what the average woman worker has to contend with. It's so hard not to look upon them collectively—as things—especially when they don't speak the language. I—I had to make him understand their condition."

"One reason I gave him over to you." Mr. Ames nodded, fitting his half-closed hands over each other. "Well?"

"Reports and statistics were sent up from Mr. Fletcher's office, and we went over them as best we could. I feel that I've done all I can, but this morning, when I told him so, he insisted on my continuing. But he is remarkably quick in assimilating the details of the régime—and—I can't be of any further use. The forewoman of the brassière department went home sick this noon. May I report to Mr. Fletcher that I am at liberty to take it over?"

"Sit down a moment, will you?" He did not appear to notice her hesitation. "I want to talk to you. You've been at the plant nearly five years, now, haven't you, Terry?" he asked, and she started at the name. "I've kept in close touch with you ever since you've been with us. I've had records concerning you from every department. I want you to

realize that I know—and prize highly—exactly what you are and what you have done."

It was the first bit of commendation she had had from him, but she made no reply, and he seemed to expect none. Both were intent on his next words:

"My son has not been in Torpbridge for a good many years—college, travel, the war have all had the years I—I wanted. Now, we," and he looked deliberately into the blue-green eyes, "are going to keep him here. I chose you to initiate him into the work because of your loyalty to the firm and your knowledge and championship of the worker. The closer the two are knit together, the happier the factory."

"But I have done—I—I have shown him all I know."

"I want you to keep on for a few days."

"But I prefer not! If you, please, Mr. Ames—"

"And if there is really no further instruction that you can give him, a little play won't hurt you. That is all."

Mike, waiting patiently in the corridor that led to the private offices, intercepted her lagging departure.

"Angry?"

The blue faded out of Terry's eyes and they burned the color of the Nile waters.

"You took a mean advantage when you—"

"When I knew you had decided to quit me?" There was a coaxing plea for forgiveness tangled in the mischief of his smile. "War tactics."

"But there's absolutely nothing more that I can tell you or show you!"

"Honestly?"

"Yes."

"Thank the Lord! Now we can go for a ride and cool off. Get your hat and come on."

"I can't. Don't be ridiculous."

"Didn't the governor say to play with

me?" the son demanded. Then, suddenly serious, "I say, do I bore you?"

"No," Terry admitted reluctantly.

"Then why in the world don't you say, 'All right. Get your bus and come on?'" But she remained silent until he burst out, "Oh, come on! Forget all this efficiency-waste-motion-coördination-of-head-and-hand stuff that you've been feeding me for a week, and make a try at acting like a human being! You'll turn into a machine if you don't watch out!"

Then she lifted startled eyes to his.

"Do you mean that I don't act like a human being?"

Mike's reply was gravely judicial:

"I won't say that, but you need limbering up—cups filled with oil. You're squeaky at the joints. Didn't the governor say to play with me?"

"Yes, because you asked him to."

"Exactly, to quote his revered self. I say, Terry!"

"What?"

"Please?"

It was a brilliantly jeweled day. They rode for an hour or more within view of the sapphire sea, rolling and tossing in its lambent play, throwing softly into the air delicate filigrees of diamond spray. Beneath them, the road threaded its singing smoothness over undulating hills, through spice-filled emerald woods, and back to the sea once more. In the clear distance were the graceful forms of fleeting sail-boats and bulkily substantial steamships and tugs storming half-heartedly against the burdened inertness of trailing barges, while beyond lay the white banks of the island. The air was filled with a magic that silenced the words on their lips and hurried their hearts to quick, unsteady throbbing.

They had tea at a tiny inn, built far out on a jutting point of land, where the sky and the wind and the waves did their beautiful best to help Mike. But

the girl remained coolly, distantly sweet.

All at once he leaned toward her, his lips widened in the smile that revealed the even teeth and the ghosts of lost dimples in his cheeks.

"You aggravating, green-eyed little devil!" he said slowly. "You were so jolly and decent to me at first—and now you've hardly spoken to me for three days!" A look of resolution that reminded her instantly of his father swept over his face. "But you can't put me off!"

He lifted the hand that lay clenched on her knee. Gently his big fingers straightened her tense ones.

"You have the most wonderful hands in the world, Terry," and he bent his head to the one he held.

But she slipped easily to her feet, thrusting her hands deep into her pockets.

"We've got to hurry back. I'm going to that meeting to-night."

"Not a chance. We're going to motor somewhere for dinner. Besides, I don't care much for the idea of your going to that meeting. Some of your friends, the enemy, might start something, and you might get hurt."

"How silly! I want to stop that walk-out if I can. I am so glad—so glad you decided to meet their demands," and she smiled her warm, rare smile.

"I'll give 'em the whole factory if you'll keep smiling like that," he offered. "But you can't go to that meeting."

"I must. Hurry, please. And please don't argue."

"All right. Then I'll go with you and we'll get dinner afterward," and at her smile of negation, he grinned impudently upon her. "You can't help yourself. What a wonder you'll be when you learn to play!"

When they reached the hall where the mass meeting was to be held, it was

half past seven.² At the door was stationed a woman whose surprised objections were rapidly overcome by Terry's calm decision.

"All right," she agreed. "Gwan in. But who's this guy?"

Terry glanced back carelessly.

"Oh, that's just Mike. Let him in."

The hall was big and bare, smoke-stained and racked with the look peculiar to people and things around whom too much violence has bruted. A center aisle ran its narrowly murky course from the low doorway to the speaker's platform. To-night the place was capacity crowded, every seat was taken, and people were standing at the back and along the sides. The majority of them were foreigners, and women, but near the front was a little knot of machinists, intent on their own troubles and awaiting a conference with Connolly.

Instantly Terry recognized the speaker. It was Connolly himself. He was a huge man, with hulking shoulders raised high around a short, thick neck. Standing at the very edge of the platform, he leaned forward, gesturing angrily, and as Terry wedged her way through the crowd, with Mike close behind her, his voice rose to a bellow.

"What kind of a deal d'yuh get here, anyway?" he shouted. "Yuh punch the clock at seven-thirty an' yuh punch it again at four-thirty or five or five-thirty—accordin' to whether Ames' orders 're fat 'r not! Yuh have tuh pay f'yuh thread an' yuh get fined f' this an' docked f' that until what yuh get outen a day's work ain't hardly worth the bringin' home! Not satisfied with takin' it out on yuh in fines, he gets yuh tuh do a bunch of his stuff overtime! An' does he pay yuh anythin' extra fuh overtime? Not he! Same old rates! Don'chu know he's gotta pay yuh time an' a half—or double time—if yuh only had th' guts tuh make him! But no! Yuh stan' round snivel-

in' like a lot o' drivelin' damn' idiots an' let him take money offen yuh! What th' hell's th' matter with yuh? Ain't Ames got autos an' houses an' yachts enough without you tryin' tuh give him more? 'S that yuh game? 'Re yuh tryin' tuh support him in ease an' luxuries 'r d'yuh take an interest in yuh own affairs? He'll squeeze an' squeeze yuh until yuh're sawdust! A little off here an' a little off there until there ain't nothin' left! He's the craftiest son of a pirate in the game! Talkin' smooth so't you won't notice wot he's tryin' to put over!"

He paused suddenly, and his face became congested with an angry flood of blood. His head sunk between his shoulders, he leaned out perilously.

"Say—wot kind of a bunch of soft-headed yaps are you? Wot d'yuh mean, lettin' th' firm's representative intuh yuh meetin's?" he bawled. He leveled a finger at Terry. "Anybody here wot gets their bread an' butter lick-spittlin' Ames better get out while the goin's good! We don't want none o' yuh here!" Then, as she stood motionless staring straight at him, he yelled furiously, "I don' wanna start nothin', but if yuh don' beat it *quick*, I'll write yuh name on th' blackboard, there, in letters a foot high—an' th' crowd'll do th' rest!"

"I wouldn't if I were you!"

Terry shook off Mike's detaining hand and walked serenely down the aisle.

"You see," she explained politely, as she neared the platform, "everybody here knows me." Her glance searched the rows of familiar faces, clouded now with suspicion and doubt. "And my name is usually seen and used in connection with something decent and honest and straight! Crooks"—she paused, and her eyes flashed flame at the organizer—"and liars—leave it alone!"

The man leaped from the platform and Mike bounded to her side simul-

taneously. Her slim, well-muscled young body, poised so lightly between the two, seemed to half sway, ready to spring. But although her voice was vibrant, it remained low and under perfect control.

"Stand away, both of you!" she ordered. She kept her eyes on the organizer until he obeyed. Then she turned to the crowd, most of them now on their feet. "Sit down. I'm going to give this thing to you straight. A good many of you have known me for years—and know whether to believe me. But whether you know me or not, you know whether what this man has been saying is true! You know what kind of a deal you have had, whether Mr. Ames has treated you well or badly! You know how the wages compare with the other factories! You know the sick-leave policy, the insurance policy. You know the conditions under which you work better than any one else—because you profit by them! Why are you all so anxious to get in here? Now you want more money and time and a half overtime. Well—it's a reasonable request, isn't it?"

A surprised mutter that rose to a yell of delight followed her words. Two or three called out:

"You're all right, Terry!"

But Lillian Merkle, from her place in the front row, sprang up with a snarl of rage.

"Then what've yuh been workin' against it for, yuh crook?" she screamed. "Yuh've done all yuh could against us, and now, when yuh find yuh can't do us outa what we oughta have, yuh pretend yuh're with us! We don't wanna have nothin' to do with yuh, yuh double-faced scut! Get out! We're through with yuh——"

But Terry's voice broke through, clear and triumphant:

"I've been working for you for a week! And I told you—some of you—days and days ago, to go to Mr. Ames

—that he had always done the square thing and that he always would! But you had been talked to—you're always ready to believe evil of the man at the head—and instead of sending a committee to him, you're planning to organize and then strike! All this trouble, when you can get what you want by just asking!" A cheer went up from the girls, but Terry continued: "Unions are wonderful sometimes—they've helped establish justice time and again—but what wrongs have you to be remedied? Of course it's to the interest of the unions to swell their number, but—"

"Enough o' your jawin'!" The organizer sprang toward her. "Yuh've had your say! Now, get out or I'll throw yuh out!"

Terry's reply flashed before Mike's growl.

"I've beaten you! There'll be no strike here, Mr. Connolly! I tell you it's men like you that do the unions more harm than anything else! Why couldn't you stick to the truth? You know Mr. Ames gives these girls a fair deal! You know Mr. Ames—"

"'Mr. Ames!' 'Mr. Ames!' Yuh like tuh give yuhself away, don't yuh? Yuh've been bought, my pretty lady! We all admire his taste, but why—"

A hand swept Terry aside, and Mike stood before Connolly. He eyed the Irishman with professional interest, smiling slightly.

"I'm going to half murder you for that," he promised cheerily, and swung on him.

Connolly went down, and Mike stood off while he scrambled to his feet again.

With a roar, Connolly made a bull rush, his guard wide open, and Mike caught him on the jaw with a right cross that jolted him short. The big man reeled back, covering up, and Mike, standing flat-footed, waited pleasantly. There was a tumult in the room

—a medley of voices and a scraping of feet—as the women cried out and the men hurried to points of vantage. They crowded about Terry as she stood with her back to the platform.

Connolly was the bigger of the two, but Mike was quicker, cleaner in his motions, and he knew better how to let every ounce of weight follow his fist. Connolly fought with malignant fury; the younger man with a placid "sorry-but-I've-got-to-kill-you" nonchalance. Once Connolly crashed home a left that looked powerful enough to sink a dreadnaught. Mike's knees sagged, but he blocked two swift rights and, after a minute's sparring, came home with a fusillade of body blows that made the other grunt.

Terry, with steel in her eyes, watched Mike's piledriving blows and the punishment dealt by the knotted fists with a glow of gratification that horrified her. She was faintly conscious of the thudding of blows, the scuffling of the men's feet, the hard breathing and muttered ejaculations of the spectators. She saw Connolly weakening, his guard slackening. More of Mike's jabbing body blows landed. Then the Irishman missed a swing, and she saw Mike's arm cleave the air in a deadly uppercut that caught the point of Connolly's jaw. The next second, he was down.

Mike stood for a moment looking at him; then he searched the ring of faces for Terry. He came toward her, his hand imperatively outstretched for hers; and as she reached his side and turned with him to the aisle, she realized for the first time that they were completely encircled by men.

It had been a good, clean fight, and they had all enjoyed watching it, but now that a man of their own kind, their advocate, lay knocked out, mingled passion and resentment began to show in their faces. There was a turbulent rumble of protests as Mike tried to

make his way through. The man directly in front of him stood his ground, glaring.

"Get out of the way, will you?" said Mike pleasantly.

The man hesitated.

"Stand back!"

The man wavered aside, and while indecision yet claimed the crowd, Mike, with Terry caught close, cut his way through. As they passed from the hall, they heard a clear girl voice cry, "'S matter with Terry?" and then an outburst of laughter and cheers from the women.

The moon shone huge and yellow as they rode away through the streets. The jangle of the street cars and the whirring of passing motors did not come to them; they were isolated, detached from surrounding humanity. At the intersection of two streets, they paused, in obedience to the traffic officer's lifted hand, and when they passed him under the glare of the arc light, his glance fell curiously on Mike's bloodstained face and torn coat and the tense young girl at his side.

Terry was hazily aware of the look. With an effort, she turned toward Mike.

"Are—are you hurt?"

And from a great distance came the slow reply, "No, dear."

They rode swiftly, wordlessly, on through the night. They passed beyond the city's avenues and the suburban streets, out into the country places. At the top of a winding grade, Mike stopped the car and, from the summit of a high, peaceful hill, they looked down into the heart of the city they had left. Beyond the steadfast gleams of the homes and the blatant electric signs, their glance sought the velvety darkness of the sea, where tortoise-moving star points showed, and broad, intermittent flares from the lighthouses. Above them, the moon mounted her triumphant way, and from all around

them came the sighing of wind-swept leaves.

And all at once it seemed to Terry that the quiet was transformed into an enchanted web that drew its silken meshes closer about her with every second that Mike's eyes rested upon her.

"Where are we going?" she asked, and her voice sounded dull and lifeless.

The smile was quite gone from the purple eyes, and the whole lean length of him was tense; as he sat motionless, his arms folded on the wheel.

"I—" He broke off.

"Hadn't we better go back?"

But he began again as if she had not spoken:

"It was a narrow squeak, there. I wouldn't have had a chance if they'd started anything." He spoke meditatively, almost as if he were alone. "I was afraid of what might happen—when I looked at you and knew there was only me between you and those roughnecks. I was afraid—and I never was afraid before!"

Terry huddled back in her seat, silent, her gaze full upon him.

"You're never going to take such risks again."

He took her hand and held it gently between his own. Then, as she made no response, he bent and touched his lips to it as he had done that afternoon. But her hand remained passive in his grasp, and her eyes sought the distant lights.

Slowly his hand tightened over hers and he chuckled suddenly. He met her surprise with his gamin grin, a merry miracle of tenderness and mischief that sent the blood throbbing to her throat.

"If you had a machine half as unresponsive as you are, you'd scrap it," he declared reproachfully. "I'm trying to propose—and I've never done it before. You liked me at first—I know you did—and then an enterprising spirit from the polar zone came and

froze you through. Terry—what was it?"

She withdrew her hand, and her face was pale and drawn in the moonlight.

"You—you—are being ridiculous, aren't you? It isn't a fair deal to—to flirt with me—or propose to me," she added on his quick growl. "Your father has been—very—wonderful to me, and—and I won't worry him, or hurt him, through you."

Mike was silent for a moment; then he asked simply:

"You'd do anything for him, wouldn't you, Terry?"

Terry nodded, her throat aching.

"Even to marrying me?" with a twinkle.

The dark lashes swept down over the green eyes, but before they fell, Mike caught the glint of tears. His hands reached out swiftly and clasped her shoulders.

"You don't quite do the governor justice yet, Terry, old girl. He wished me Godspeed this morning."



THE DEEPER WISDOM

THE little winds are shivering
Across the fresh young grass,
And wandering breaths of morning bring
Cool earth scents as they pass,
And from the close I hear them sing,
My little lad and lass.

For vernal ardors in their veins
Are rioting to-day;
The light feet of the April rains
Dance round them where they play,
And swelling buds peep out again
With frolic hints of May.

And life is quickening in the sod
And flashing in the rills,
And where the feet of morn have trod
A new, strange wonder thrills,
As down green slopes the signs of God
Are set along the hills.

And still my little girl and boy
Are glad, yet know not why.
Enough for them the moment's joy.
The smiling field and sky;
Wiser than we whom doubts annoy,
Who hear the old, sad cry.

JAMES B. KENYON.



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

By

ALAN DALE

After sitting through a performance of Sophocles' "Electra," at Carnegie Hall recently, I heard a gentleman with long hair and a drab face deplore the demise of Greek tragedy and declaim fervently on its emotional beauties. Some day, said he, there would arise a great American dramatist, who would find in our national life material for tragedies as great as those of the Greek writers.

Now that statement made me feel rather peevish. There is not the slightest necessity to wait for the birth of any tragedy-making gentlemen, and no occasion whatsoever to deplore our immunity from that sort of thing. I unhesitatingly declare that our tragedies are as incisively and mordantly terrifying as any that came from the old writers. As a matter of fact, our tragedies are—our musical comedies!

If you can discover for me anything more gruesomely sorrowful than our "musical shows," you surely have the soul of an explorer. There is, moreover, something triumphantly sardonic in these affairs, and their fatalistic trend is quite as convincing as anything that Sophocles suggested. Sometimes as I sit through them—through their long, unending series—I marvel at their absolute similarity, at their amazing complexity, and at the sheer audacity of their puerility. Often they might be considered beautiful, by reason of

their truth to one single model. The drama changes; new ideas crop up; certain treatment grows old-fashioned; novel themes are ventilated; in a word, there is movement. But with the musical show, nothing varies. It is persistently the same. One season, the girls wear blond hair; the next, they are brunettes. One season, the chorus is stately and "Junoesque;" the next, it is diminutive and "cunning." Apart from this, the musical show has scarcely moved in a quarter of a century.

The oldest inhabitant—an awful bore!—will tell you that when he was a boy, the town went wild over a big musical show entitled "The Black Crook." I happened to see "The Black Crook," not at its original performance, for there is a limit even to *my* memory, but at a revival many years ago, at the Academy of Music, and I think I can say that there is no conceivable difference between that entertainment and those that are offered each season at the Winter Garden. If, for instance, anybody told me that the new show at the Winter Garden, "Sinbad," was merely a version of "The Black Crook," I should believe it implicitly. It is quite baffling. Yet there is something tremendous in the unerring vogue of this form of entertainment. There is something Greek in the astounding "attack" made by these curious diversions.

Since last August, I have studied quite a number of musical entertainments, and perhaps I have been deplorably silent on the subject. I have told you much about our comedies and our farces and our dramas, but of our tragedies I have said extremely little. "Electra" awakened me to my sense of duty. Why the Greek tragedy? Why not the American?

Looking through my list, I discover, studded in my dramatic experiences, quite a number of musical shows. To be explicit, in the last few months I have viewed such productions as "Leave It to Jane," "Maytime," "The Riviera Girl," "Jack o' Lantern," "Doing Our Bit," "The Laird of Joy," "Miss 1917," "Kitty Darlin'," "Her Regiment," "Odds and Ends," "The Star Gazer," "Over the Top," "The Grass Widow," "Flo-Flo," "Words and Music," "Going Up," the Cohan Revue of 1918, "Oh, Lady! Lady!" "Girl o' Mine," "The Love Mill," and "Sinbad."

The two remarks that can be made with absolute safety about these productions—and I may add that they invariably *are* made—are: "The settings were handsome," and, "The girls were comely." Of course it is possible to say a good deal more—in fact, for a critic, it is positively essential to say a great deal more—but anything further is difficult. That is the tragedy of it—the American tragedy! Musical comedy refuses to budge or to keep up with the times, but the critic is not permitted to use just one stereotyped form of review. He certainly could do that, for only the title of the production and the names of the cast are altered, but his tragic lot is to unearth novel remarks and apparent criticism every time he sees a new musical show.

The great attraction in "Sinbad," at the Winter Garden, is the comedian known as Al Jolson, an extremely pleasing and amusing personality—an artist in his way. To get Mr. Jolson

"over," as the saying is, it is necessary that he "black up"—principally because he has always done that—and that he be surrounded by all sorts of expensive scenery, all sorts of expensive girls, and all sorts of expensive devices. That is Al Jolson's tragedy. He is a singularly humorous person, with a tremendous gift of repartee and patter and an inexhaustible fund of magnetism. But to "get" him, it is necessary to sponsor a singularly long entertainment, which it is quite possible to like and equally possible to dislike. Just as there is no rose without thorns, so there can be no Al Jolson without the weedy encumbrances of the musical show. I should think that an evening of Al Jolson, undiluted, would be perfectly delightful and most economical. He is a host in himself. He could entertain the multitude unassisted. But to get at him at the Winter Garden, behold two acts and fifteen scenes staged by J. C. Huffman; dialogue and lyrics by Harold Atteridge; music by Sigmund Romberg; musical numbers arranged by Jack Mason; orchestra directed by Oscar Radin; ballets arranged by Alexis Kosloff; art director, Watson Barratt. And so on, and so forth!

Is it not tragic—this obscurity of a personality that is genuinely dominant? In "Sinbad," Al Jolson is everything—and yet everything else is so overweeningly opulent. It is Al Jolson who is the drawing power, but scores of others hedge him in. He is set to music, to girl, and to scenery. The Greek tragedy was at least simple; ours is dreadfully complex and terrifically costly.

Do not imagine for one moment that I see a Winter Garden entertainment without enjoying it. I do enjoy it, realizing its tragedy. I like looking at pretty girls—though I confess that I do not like them standing over my head on the "runway"—and I revel in fine scenic effects. One's system cries out

occasionally for frivolity, but it is the lack of difference in the frivolity that is so appalling. Then at the Winter Garden show there is the disconcerting idea—for me, at any rate—that something must be said about it. What? And how? The same thing I said about its predecessor? That would be unpardonable. Therefore an entertainment that permits an audience to be brainlessly amused is, for the critic, an arduous occasion for taxed brain. The critic's tragedy is that while it may be child's play to write an illuminating review of an Ibsen play or of a Shakespearean production, there is something of a nightmare in the idea of "criticizing" the Winter Garden.

Of the two entertainments entitled "Girl o' Mine" and "The Love Mill," I can recall nothing whatsoever. I saw both diligently. They are hopelessly mingled in my mind—which I happened to take to the theater with me. I can generally remember some salient feature in a play, no matter how many I see, but in the musical show a haze covers everything. All is blurred in a sort of unfathomable fog.

I look at my programs shamefacedly and I see that "Girl o' Mine" was by Philip Bartholomae, whilst "The Love Mill" was by Earl Carroll; that one was presented by Miss Elisabeth Marbury, and the other by Andreas Dippel; but I do not know why. There was no apparent distinction. Each had girls who sang and danced, and each had episodes that were spoken. Further, each ended at about eleven o'clock, not because they had arrived at any conclusion—there is no logical conclusion to the musical show—but because it was time for the audience to go home, or, at any rate, to leave the theater. In the musical show, the conventions are observed so rigorously that one might be pardoned for imagining that any deviation from rule and regulation would be punished severely.

The schedule is easy and deliciously primitive. When the curtain rises, the stage is filled with pleasant girls, who sing more or less merrily. They really have nothing to sing, but they sing just the same! It is the prescribed thing. You do not know what it is about. The name of the gentleman who wrote the lyrics is ostentatiously programmed, but the dear little girls eat the lyrics hungrily. Nothing is left of them.

After that, a couple of comedy people appear, primed with everything but comedy. They talk considerably, and seem to believe that they are elucidating a plot. It is hopelessly involved, and after a time you give it up and refuse to be disturbed. Such plots can safely be left for any who can discover them.

Then the girls all stand in stained-glass attitudes and look off stage. They appear to be awfully excited about nothing at all, but later you discover that the "star" is "due." Enter the star. If a he-star, he gathers all the girls around him and gazes fixedly—not at the girls—but at the audience; if a she-star, the girls stand behind her, so that her gorgeous gowns may emerge unmolested. In either case, the star sings and is encored. That is another tragedy of musical comedy—the encore. The encore is carefully rehearsed. Even if uncalled for, it has to be! If you should happen to cough, after the star's song, that cough is regarded as quite sufficient applause to warrant an encore. But if nobody even coughs, and there is one of those silences that can be felt, there must still be the encore. I always feel as I imagine the poor geese must feel when they are violently and forcibly fed, with a view to *pâté de foie gras*. After all these encores, I feel tragically distended.

After the star, the comic relief. The comic relief is a good old idea that has

prevailed for ages. To-day, it is distinctly unnecessary, for the reason that it is not comic and is not relief. Still, it has to be. The comic relief uses the newspapers for inspiration, and is an adept at the selection of topics. At present, he says things about the "draft;" he chats amusingly about "exemption;" he throws compliments at the kaiser; and he tells stories that point all these things. That is the only way in which you can possibly discover the date of a musical-comedy production. I fancy that "The Black Crook," properly fitted up with topical allusions to the war, would be marvelously up to date.

The first act ends with all the chorus and principals standing grouped on the stage, singing at the top of their lungs, the louder, the better! The more strenuous the lung power, the more will the "ginger" and paprika of the production be applauded. Noise never fails. The orchestra must blazon forth its brasses and its drums, and above these the strident tones of the cunning little merry-merries will make themselves heard—and almost felt. This never varies.

There are two more acts. Their schedule is absolutely the same as the first. All the girls change their clothes, and perhaps the star is disguised, for in musical comedy the plot nearly always deals with somebody being mistaken for somebody else. The he-star poses as a titled person, to be reckoned with later, and the she-star dons the garbs of her own maid and is courted by a gallant king of some mythical realm. At eleven everything is suddenly cleared—without the slightest provocation—and you shuffle into your overcoat and hat, because you see the rest doing it.

One of the really humorous things about the musical show is to watch the audience as it realizes the end. The audience knows exactly when it is all

over. There is never any doubt. The audience sees the merry-merries gathering in the wings and that is the cue for the finale—the blessed finale!

Of late, however, there has been a rather daring "innovation"—at least it would seem like an innovation in the musical show. Of course it is really not in the least startling. The idea is to make the musical show almost rational—that is to say, to give it a semblance of drama. If you see "Oh, Lady! Lady!" you will realize what I mean. The title of this piece means nothing; it is meant to suggest nothing. The title is a sop to the element that patronizes the musical show by reason of its inanity and vapidity. Now "Oh, Lady! Lady!" in spite of its title that makes for the prescribed brand of puerility, is not puerile. Don't tell it that I said so. It would be terribly grieved at such a perverted notion! It has a book and lyrics by Guy Bolton and P. G. Wodehouse, who really do try, in a sort of abashed manner, to steer the musical-comedy bark away from the rocks of imbecility. Of course, they are not allowed to have full swing. The musical show must live up to its standard. If it had backbone, it would be frightfully criticized. I fancy that it would be called "high-brow," and you know how dreadful that is. Messrs. Guy Bolton and P. G. Wodehouse go as near to the rational as is safe at the present time. Just the same, this latest effort of theirs betrays a little anxiety and some sort of remorse for their previous works. If they continue writing, they will probably conform to the tragic idea of the musical show and apologize for their aberrations.

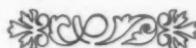
"The Grass Widow" really refused to conform to the rules and regulations. It was an entertainment by Rennold Wolf and Channing Pollock which was so good that it was unpardonable. It was shelved because it was un-

disciplined. The authors imagined that they could be intelligent without offending the patrons of this brand of theatrical ware, and they were duly punished. Any perfectly intelligent person could have viewed "The Grass Widow" without the slightest damage. Messrs. Wolf and Pollock were too audacious. They were ahead of their time.

And "Flo-Flo!" I believe it was a great success, and I can believe it readily. The leading lady appeared wearing a lovely pair of corsets and displaying a delightful figure, and in addition to this there was a lingerie parade! That was the great attraction—a pro-

cession of underclothes! "Going Up" I am bound to say I appreciated as genuinely humorous, it being a musical version of "The Aviator," a farce that was clever when it was originally presented.

Perhaps some day we shall have a national theater, duly endowed, and I rather fancy that it will become a comfortable home for the musical show, which really seems to be our national drama. And such a drama will stand—yes, it *will* stand, for it has such shapely legs to stand upon! And in the years to come the people will revive the old American tragedies, and they will be—the musical comedies!



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THESE are the city's poets,
These people in the park,
Who sit and watch slow shadows
Melt into the dark;

Who come on Maytime evenings,
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The bubble of the moon;

Who listen to the fountain
That tinkles all day long,
And let its echo lodge with them,
An anthem and a song.

Young lovers loiter gladly
In many a leafy place,
And look with the old wonder
Into each other's face.

These are the happy poets
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Who keep wise dreams within their hearts
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CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.

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AND now for a glimpse at the next AINSLEE'S. The novelette is a sparkling tale of Long Island society life with a strong undercurrent of seriousness running beneath its superficial gayety. "The God In the Machine" is its title, and Elinor Chipp its author.

Notable among the June short stories will be "Mademoiselle Rahab," a glamorous romance of the Orient by Charles Saxby, who wrote "Shoes" in this present number; "The Mannequin," the story of a vain little clothes model by Alicia Ramsey; "Out of Bounds," the weird tale of a man who either did or did not actually discover the eternal woman, by John Fleming Wilson, author of "The Man Who Came Back;" "The Queen of Hearts," in which F. Berkeley Smith solves for us the mystery of a certain alluring lady; "The Cuckoo's Nest," a remarkable story by Della Thompson Lutes; and "Her Absolute Discretion," the third sprightly episode in the love affairs of F. E. Bailey's young heroine.

The subject of the next of Anice Terhune's brilliant super-woman articles is Elizabeth Chudleigh, "the merry duchess." She, you will remember, flourished in the days of George II. Thackeray pictured her as Beatrix in "Henry Esmond" and as the Baroness Bernstein in "The Virginians." It may be objected, in the cases of many of these super-women, that they neglected to marry. The duchess seems to have gone to the other extreme, having been formally convicted of bigamy. Whatever else she may have been, she is extremely entertaining.





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The *Metropolitan* in October, 1914, in an editorial "The Lesson" by H. J. Whigham, began its campaign for preparedness, two months after the invasion of Belgium. (*This was months before the submarine menace.*)

The *Metropolitan* in March, 1915, urged Universal Service in an article by Theodore Roosevelt "The Need of Preparedness." (*It wasn't the popular thing to do at the time, but it was right then as it is now.*)

The *Metropolitan* in October, 1915, called for fleets of airplanes in an article by Richard Harding Davis "Our Eagle Without Wings." (*The American Army had twelve airplanes at this time.*)

The *Metropolitan* in a keynote editorial "Murder on the High Seas" by Theodore Roosevelt, was for America's active participation in the war following the sinking of the Lusitania. (*This was the heyday of German activities in America.*)

The *Metropolitan* on May 8th, 1917, in "Put the Flag on the Firing Line" by Theodore Roosevelt, advocated sending American troops to France immediately. (*On April 13th Secretary of War Baker stated that "our policy at first [would be] to devote all our energies to raising troops in sufficient numbers to exert a substantial influence in a later stage of the war."*)

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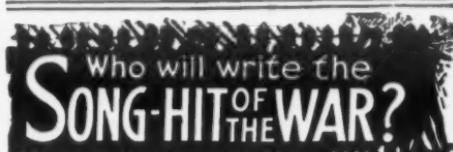
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IF THIS DAY AND AGE attention to your appearance is an absolute necessity. It is easier to make a good living of life. Not only should you wish to appear as attractive as possible for your own satisfaction, which is alone worth the trouble, but you will find the world in general judging you greatly, if not wholly, by your "looks," therefore it pays to "look your best" at all times. Permit no one to tell you that looking otherwise it will injure you well. Upon the impression this already makes rests the failure or success of your life. Which is to be your ultimate destiny? My new "Nose" corrector "TRADOS" (Model 24) corrects nose-shaped noses without operation, quickly, safely and permanently. It is pleasant and does not interfere with one's occupation, being worn at night.

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Swear Off Tobacco



Tobacco Habit Banished In 48 to 72 Hours

Immediate Results

Trying to quit the tobacco habit unaided is a losing fight against heavy odds, and means a serious shock to your nervous system. So don't try it! Make the tobacco habit quit you. It will quit you if you will just take **Tobacco Redeemer** according to directions.

It doesn't make a particle of difference whether you've been a user of tobacco for a single month or 50 years, or how much you use, or in what form you use it. Whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff—**Tobacco Redeemer** will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in from 48 to 72 hours. Your tobacco craving will begin to decrease after the very first dose—there's no long waiting for results.

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind and is the most marvelously quick, absolutely scientific and thoroughly reliable remedy for the tobacco habit.

Not a Substitute

Tobacco Redeemer is in no sense a substitute for tobacco, but is a radical, efficient treatment. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It quiets the nerves, and will make you feel better in every way. If you really want to quit the tobacco habit—get rid of it so completely that when you see others using it, it will not awaken the slightest desire in you—you should at once begin a course of **Tobacco Redeemer** treatment for the habit.

Results Absolutely Guaranteed

A single trial will convince the most skeptical. Our legal, binding, money-back guarantee goes with each full treatment. If **Tobacco Redeemer** fails to banish the tobacco habit when taken according to the plain and easy directions, your money will be cheerfully refunded upon demand.

Let Us Send You Convincing Proof

If you're a slave of the tobacco habit and want to find a sure, quick way of quitting "for keeps" you owe it to yourself and to your family to mail the coupon below or send your name and address on a postal and receive our free booklet on the deadly effect of tobacco on the human system, and positive proof that **Tobacco Redeemer** will quickly free you from the habit.

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These City Physicians Explain Why They Prescribe Nuxated Iron

To Make Healthier Women and Stronger, Sturdier Men

Now Being Used by Over Three Million People Annually

By enriching the blood and creating thousands of new red blood cells, it often quickly transforms the flabby flesh, toneless tissues, and palid cheeks of weak, anaemic men and women into a glow of health. Increases the strength of delicate, nervous, run-down folks in two weeks' time in many instances.

It is conservatively estimated that over three million people annually in this country alone are taking Nuxated Iron. Such astonishing results have been reported from its use both by doctors and laymen, that a number of physicians in various parts of the country have been asked to explain why they prescribe it so extensively, and why it apparently produces so much better results than were obtained from the old forms of inorganic iron.

Extracts from some of the letters are given below:

Dr. Ferdinand King, a New York physician and Medical Author, says: "There can be no sturdy iron men without iron. Pallor means anemia. Anemia means iron deficiency. The skin of anemic men and women is pale—the flesh flabby. The muscles lack tone, the brain fags and the memory fails and they often become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks.

"I have used Nuxated Iron widely in my own practice in most severe aggravated conditions with unfailing results. I have induced many other physicians to give it a trial, all of whom have given most surprising reports in regard to its great power as a health and strength builder."

Dr. A. J. Newman, late Police Surgeon of the City of Chicago and Former House Surgeon, Jefferson Park Hospital, Chicago, in commenting on the value of Nuxated Iron said: "This remedy has proven through my own tests of it to exceed all remedies I have ever used for creating red blood, building up the nerves, strengthening the muscles and correcting digestive disorders. The manufacturers are to be congratulated in having given to the public a long fad want, a true tonic, supplying iron in an easily digested and assimilated form. A true health builder in every sense of the word."

Dr. James Francis Sullivan, formerly physician of Bellevue Hospital (Outdoor Dept.), New York, and the Westchester County Hospital said: "I have strongly emphasized the great necessity of physicians making blood examinations of their weak, anemic, run-down patients. Thousands of persons go on year after year suffering from physical weakness and a highly nervous condition due to lack of sufficient iron in their red blood corpuscles, without ever realizing the real and true cause of their trouble. Without iron in your blood your food merely passes through the body, some what like corn through an old mill with rollers so wide apart that the mill can't grind.

"But in my opinion you can't make strong, vigor-

ous, successful, sturdy iron men by feeding them on metallic iron. The forms of metallic iron must go through a semi-digestive process to transform them into organic iron—Nuxated Iron—before they are so ready to be taken



up and assimilated by the human system. "Notwithstanding all that has been said and written on the subject by well-known physicians, thousands of people still insist in dosing themselves with metallic iron simply, I suppose, because it costs a few cents less. I strongly advise readers in all cases, to get a physician's prescription for organic iron—Nuxated Iron—or if you don't want to go to this trouble then purchase only Nuxated Iron in its original packages and see that this particular name (Nuxated Iron) appears on the package. If you have taken preparations such as Nux and Iron and other similar iron products and failed to get results, remember that such products are an entirely different thing from Nuxated Iron."

If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary Nuxated Iron three times per day for two weeks, then test your strength again, and see how much you have gained.

MANUFACTURERS' NOTE: Nuxated Iron, which is prescribed and recommended by physicians, is not a secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach. The manufacturers guarantee successful and entirely satisfactory results to every purchaser or they will refund your money. It is dispensed in this city by all good drug-gists.



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A YOUNG American captain leads his men "over the top." He finds himself, a few hours later, a prisoner in the hot-bed of militarism—Berlin. He learns at first-hand how Germany will collapse.

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